Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

David Purdy — British Capitalism since the War
Part One—Origins of the Crisis

Discussion:

Charlie Brewster
Ron Press
Graham Taylor

Socialist Democracy: Some Problems

A. M. Elliott
The Popular Front
in Spain

Document:
Communist Party of Spain
Manifesto-Programme
(Extracts Part II)

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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Editorial Correspondence
James Klugmann, 16 King Street, WC2E 8HY

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Doris Allison, above address

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The pictures on the front cover and in the Editorial Comments are reproduced from postcards published by the Propaganda Office of the Madrid People's Front Committee based on an Exhibition entitled "Homage to the International Brigade".

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Louis Althusser	Lysenko: Unfinished History
Jon Bloomfield	A Strategy for Democratic Post-School Education
Doug Bourn	Problems of Marxist History
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Editorial Comments

THE Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties, held in Berlin on June 28-30, 1976, was the most representative European Communist conference ever held. The previous one, held in Karlovy Vary, was attended by 24 parties. This time there were 29, the additional ones being Romania, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, and Norway; while Sweden, which last time was present in an observer status, this time took full part as a delegation. The only absentee was Albania, although it had been invited.

The capitalist press naturally played up all the differences, but the outcome of the conference was an agreed statement by all 29 parties present, setting out what was common ground between the parties on the big questions of peace, security, social progress and co-operation in Europe. The speech of Gordon McLennan, who led the delegation of the Communist Party of Great Britain, was published in *Comment* of July 10.

Perhaps of particular interest to readers of *Marxism Today* is the fact that a number of delegations raised political problems of perspective which have been the subject of articles and discussion in this journal. These questions included the alliance of labour and culture, different roads to socialism, "models" of socialism, political pluralism and democracy under socialism.

NEED FOR FREE DISCUSSION

A number of delegates, while rejecting the term "Euro-communism", emphasised that there were a number of common features in the countries of Western Europe which had led the Communist Parties there to adopt broadly similar solutions in seeking out their own relevant road to socialism. This was a point, for example, made by Santiago Carrillo for Spain and Enrico Berlinguer for Italy. Alvaro Cunhal (Portugal) and Franz Muhri (Austria), while firmly asserting that there was no model for socialism, emphasised that this meant no Western European model either.

Frank expression was given by some delegations to their feeling of dissatisfaction with the way the preparations for the conference had taken place, and in particular its failure to make possible a real discussion on the big theoretical and political questions that need serious debate.

Georges Marchais (France) declared:

> "We must state that conferences such as the present one do not appear to us to meet the requirements of our era. As the elaboration of a strategy common to all our Parties is completely excluded, it seems appropriate to seek new, livelier, more flexible and efficient forms of joint gatherings which would permit a thorough-going, frank and direct discussion on this or that topical problem and which would not necessarily be concluded with the adoption of a document."

Enrico Berlinguer (Italy), urging the Parties to abandon methods "which are now outdated", made a strong plea for "broader and less formal debate around the big theoretical and political problems facing the movement for socialism all over the world". While Leonid Brezhnev (Soviet Union), pointing out that "Every Party contributes to the development of revolutionary theory", went on to say that "only practical experience can be the criterion of the correctness, or conversely, the error of this or that proposition. But even before practice hands down its final verdict there is the opportunity and need for testing such propositions in comradely discussion, by a broad comparison of the viewpoints and experiences of the different parties."

The Executive Committee of the British Communist Party, taking cognisance of these views when it heard a report of the Conference at its meeting on July 10-11, and in line with the resolution of its 1967 National Congress, adopted a statement in the course of which it suggested:

> "New, more flexible forms are required which provide for more open and free debate of our different political views and assessments, while preserving and strengthening our common action against imperialism in the struggle for peace, national liberation, democracy and social progress."

DIALOGUE ON SPAIN

We print in this issue of *Marxism Today* the second selection of extracts from the Manifesto-Programme of the Communist Party of

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Spain, adopted at the end of 1975 and, at the same time, as part of the discussion on the Popular Front, an article by Lon Elliott on "The People's Front in Spain". We hope to publish soon a study of the struggles of the Spanish people since the death of Franco.

But there could be no better background for understanding this struggle than the *Dialogue on Spain* by Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, recently published by Lawrence & Wishart.[1]

This is a new type of book—neither history, autobiography, nor straight study of party policy. It is a "book-interview" with two questioners in whom Santiago detected "a substratum of friendliness together with a kind of amicable provocation", who pose the most difficult as well as the most general questions, no holds barred.

What the reader will find, in the author's own words, are "snippets of ideas, rough outlines of thinking, suggestions that in many cases may lead to queries which are not answered".

The result is a book of a remarkably searching, thought-provoking, critical and constructive kind on every aspect of the last 40 years of Spanish history and the struggles of the Spanish working class as well as some of the most living questions now under discussion in the international communist movement.

You will find memories, thoughts, judgments on—amongst a host of other items—Largo Caballero; the specific character of the Spanish Socialist Party; the uprising of October 1934; the formation and early days of the Spanish Communist Party; the struggles, merger and role of the Socialist and Communist youth (in which Carrillo himself played a key part); the development, strength and weakness of the Spanish People's Front; the positive and negative features of the Communist International and the Young Communist International; the post-war guerrilla struggle in Spain; the struggle for changes in the Communist Party leadership in Spain after 1956; his meeting with Stalin; the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968; the nature of "anti-Sovietism"; the opposition forces to Francoism in Spain; the developments within the Spanish Catholic Church; the nature of the State, the struggle to transform it, the need to search for different transitions to and forms of socialist revolution; the role of the Communist Party. Much light is thrown on the history of the Spanish Communist Party and the prospects of struggle in Spain (Franco was still alive when the book was first published in 1974 in French under the title "Tomorrow Spain").

Sometimes, in the past history of the communist movement there were things not discussed or not to be discussed in public, questions, as it were, to be avoided. One of the advantages of this type of book-interview, especially if the interviewers are in part critical, is that the author is obliged to discuss precisely these "difficult" questions.

Carrillo is, in fact, only too glad to do so. "I joined in this game", he writes:

> "being of the opinion that a communist leader today should not dodge this kind of exercise with an exposed flank. What is the use of perpetuating the image of a leader who is sure of everything, has an answer to everything, is invulnerable, and is confined in a sort of ivory tower, shut away from all contacts that might be regarded as heterodox—a tower that has been thoroughly disinfected—from which he pontificates."

[1] Santiago Carrillo—Dialogue on Spain with Régis Debray and Max Gallo, Lawrence & Wishart, hardback £4.50, paperback £2.00.

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QUESTIONS OF THEORY

His estimates of the past struggles of the Spanish Communist Party are always in the best sense critical, learning from recognised mistakes, but positive and constructive. He defends the whole strategy of the People's Front from its leftist critics.

Questioned on the role of the Communist International, he replies:

> "I believe the Comintern may have made many mistakes, some of which were bound up with excessive centralism. But to say that it did not play a role in the development of the world revolution seems to me to be contrary to the truth, because everywhere (except perhaps in Cuba) the revolution has been carried out by Communist Parties created by the Comintern. In the countries where socialism has become a reality, that has been the achievement of parties created by the Comintern."

In the course of the discussions with his interviewers Santiago Carrillo has much to say on problems of state and revolution both in general and specifically in relation to Spain:

> "In the first place, we are convinced—and this is a stand which the Party takes—that the socialist revolution means a break with the capitalist state and with capitalist society, and that a time comes when a qualitative change has to take place: if not, there can't be any talk of socialism. This means that all the reforms, all the positions won by the masses, under a regime where liberty prevails, should culminate in a change of power. . . .
>
> "But, above all, I ask myself this question: how can this process in the direction of socialism develop on a continent such as Europe, which has a very developed economy and traditions of liberty, culture?
>
> "Here I go back to Lenin—not to a single phrase, but to an essential idea which Lenin rightly developed after the October Revolution: that every Party should be capable of divining, inventing, imagining the forms which the Revolution might take in its own country, and that it is of no use copying from others."

He devotes much thought to the problem of democratising the state *now*, still under capitalism, in Spain, as part of the process of transition to socialist revolution and the thorough transformation of the state, raising many interesting problems:

> "As for the state apparatus, we shall begin by making all possible efforts to find the greatest possible amount of support even within that apparatus. That is to say, we shall not repeat in a routine fashion the criticisms that might have been made of the state apparatus forty or fifty years ago. We shall try to win over the greatest possible number of allies within that apparatus. . . .
>
> "Certainly nowadays, in the European countries, the prospects are not the same (as in the October Revolution), but it is clear that the left should win over as large a part as possible of the state apparatus in order to transform it, for without that there is no revolution. And in posing this question we should avoid stereotyped phrases and take present-day reality into account."

Carrillo returns again and again in the discussions to the character of revolutionary leadership. He agrees with Togliatti who, in 1956, had said that the errors and crimes under Stalin could not be explained just in terms of the "cult of the individual", but he does not deny the immense harmfulness of such a cult. He condemns "anti-leadership" attitudes, which, he considers, are just as idealist and reactionary.

Revolutionary leaders should totally reject the creation of a mythology about themselves:

> "they should acquire their authority through their work and not through organised propaganda. . . . As for the right to make mistakes, I must say that the leader who is capable of going out on to the public highways and saying: 'I have made such and such a mistake; I submit myself to your criticism'—such a one is a real leader and it is this that lies at the bottom of my friendly feelings towards Fidel. As for mistakes, there are no revolutionaries who do not make them. What is essential is to have the courage to admit them, to understand the reasons

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for them and to do everything possible to correct them. That is the case with Fidel and it was the case with Lenin. It is better to speak of your mistakes than to let the enemy profit from them at your expense and at the expense of your party and your class."

MARX'S *CAPITAL* IN THE *COLLECTED WORKS*

The recent publication of the first volume of *Capital* by Penguin is surely to be welcomed. For it bears witness to the impact of Marx's great work and will make it more widely read than ever.[2]

Penguin has rejected the standard English translation which was done under the direction of Engels, with Marx's own approval, and set about to improve in various ways its accuracy and readability.

As everyone knows, *Capital* is a long and "difficult" text. And its editing and translating into English cannot but present problems.

The first volume was translated by Marx's friend Dr. Samuel Moore and his "son-in-law" Edward Aveling, under the direct supervision of Engels. Later, a much inferior translation, by Eden and Cedar Paul (with an introduction by G. D. H. Cole) was published, in two volumes, in Dent's Everyman Library.

Volumes Two and Three (which Penguin also propose to issue) were put together after Marx's death (he left the third unfinished) by Engels, who devoted much of his last years to this task. They were afterwards rather inaccurately translated into English by Ernest Unterman, a German emigré in the United States, and published by Kerr of Chicago. Since then, the Unterman translation has been completely revised by the editorial staff of the English Department of Progress Publishers, Moscow.

One of the tasks of the fifty-volume English edition of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* published by Lawrence & Wishart and now under way, will be the preparation of an authoritative English text of *Capital*.

Additionally, the *Collected Works* will include a volume of all the most important "Variants" of *Capital*—that is, manuscript materials presenting various drafts on numerous points, and chapters not finally incorporated in the work as published in German. There are hundreds of pages of these "Variants", few of which have ever yet been available to English (or any other) readers.

As regards Volume One, it was agreed when starting to prepare the *Collected Works* that English versions which had been made under the direct control of Marx or Engels or both for publication during their lifetimes should stand as "authorised". Volume One of *Capital* will therefore be given in the form approved by Engels on Marx's behalf.

But while the editors will not seek to alter the English text approved by Engels, the work of collating it with the original German will be undertaken, and all points in which the slightest discrepancy is discernible, or in which there is any unnecessary obscurity or awkwardness in the English wording, will be noted. As with all the volumes of the *Collected Works, Capital* will be provided with a thorough "apparatus" of explanatory and reference notes, and indexes.

The translation of volumes Two and Three, however, will be thoroughly revised, and editorial notes supplied to elucidate Engels' editorial work in arranging Marx's copious posthumous manuscripts.

Ultimately, a "popular" English edition of the three volumes of *Capital,* based on all the work done in preparing the text for the *Collected Works*, will be published. Meantime, the translation of Volume One which Engels edited will remain on sale in the current Lawrence & Wishart edition, together with Volumes Two and Three as edited by the Progress Publishers staff. These are three durable hardbacks on sale at the modest price of £2 each volume.

Besides this, the *Theories of Surplus Value* —the so-called "fourth volume of *Capital*"— is likewise available in the Lawrence & Wishart edition (in three volumes, translated respectively by Emile Burns, Renate Simpson and Jack Cohen).

WILLIAM BLAKE'S AMERICA

It will be interesting to see, Chris Rubinstein writes to us, if this summer's celebration of the bicentenary of the American Declaration of Independence leads to any publicity being given to William Blake's poem *America*, one of the finest political poems in the English language. *America, a Prophecy*, was printed in 1794 and bears the marks of inspiration of the French Revolution in an early hopeful phase, which had already been the subject of two short books of Blake's.

At the time of writing the poem Blake was friendly with Tom Paine, whose part in the American Revolution is eulogised and whose personal experience was presumably a valuable source of material for the text. Understanding Blake's longer poems has

[2] Penguin, £2.95.

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always been a stumbling block, generally demanding at least access to one or more of the critical books on Blake's life and works, but the main themes of *America* are easier to follow than those of his other poems. The radicalism of the most advanced section of the rising bourgeoisie in Britain impressed Blake, though with a content much richer and more profound for him than typical for them. This stand is personified in the best lines of the poem by the heroic free-thinking and altruistic Orc who fights with dialectical ingenuity and wins the battle of ideas, his enemy being the royal and imperial Albion's Angel, the chief warrior of reaction, whose invective expresses self-righteousness and the desire to inflict a brutal defeat on the rebels.

Blake's philosophy, Rubinstein continues, included a detestation of what we now identify as mechanical materialism because of its deprecation of human personality. The essence of the poem is a declaration of faith in the human imagination and its application to the practice of living collective as well as individual. Blake's Christianity (the form his faith took) was both categorical and challengingly unorthodox. He repudiated doubt on the authenticity of miracles as reported in the New Testament by commenting that a small pamphlet, clearly meaning Paine's *Common Sense*, had overthrown the armies of Europe. The course and outcome of the American Revolution and war meant the freeing of masses of individuals from the oppressions of empire and monarchy, and the hope, not realised, of an end to slavery. There opened in the view of Blake and other progressive people the prospect of a society characterised by national independence, democracy, cultural and spiritual development and material abundance. The analogy with the theme of resurrection which appears in the poem could be expected to appeal to the dissenters at the core of the radical movement. However the vision remains a vision, and there is an abrupt return to the horrors of colonial warfare.

DEPTH OF INSIGHT

The emphasis of the second best part of the poem centres on the mental torment of the erstwhile loyal subject of King George III who is compelled by his doubts to raise fundamental and unanswerable questions, and finally to join the Republican cause led by Washington and Paine. The depth of insight achieved by the precise argument is remarkable in the light of our own knowledge, and in the Preludium to the whole poem, the first 37 lines, there is an equally accomplished description of the effect of puberty on the legendary Orc and female companion.

The ending of the poem is marked by the triumph of the revolution in the thirteen colonies due, as Blake sees, both to the resistance of the best sections of American society and the demoralisation in the home country at the waging of an unjust war. The potentially insurgent forces in Europe are strengthened, and after the interval of a few years occur the even greater events of the French Revolution and similar upheavals elsewhere in Europe. All the bastions of monarchical rule and religious bondage have been effectively undermined. The historic process of unprecedented social ferment has commenced.

In places Blake's use of poetic licence weakens the impact of the verse. The level of interest falls off in the second half.

America had virtually no recognition. A handful of copies were printed and sold between 1794 and 1827, the year of Blake's death. Etchings of his are on the plates which are works of art in their own right. They are not directly connected with the narrative but illustrate the underlying beliefs and values. The book was originally priced at half a guinea which put it outside the purchasing power of the artisan class, let alone the mass of the population. Moreover the wave of reaction under the premiership of Pitt the Younger commenced in 1793 and entailed the suppression of the radical movement and in practice a harsh censorship, which lasted for most of the rest of Blake's life. Because of derogatory references to George III, four plates of 72 lines were cancelled, either by Blake or the printer, leaving *America* 263 lines long. In a Socialist Britain where poetry will have become a major art form, if not earlier, we can believe the genius of William Blake will be understood and acclaimed.

Correction

In relation to the article by Dave Cook on "Parliament and Power", Part One, in our July issue, it has been pointed out that the House of Commons "Select Committee on Estimates" has been replaced by the Select Committee on Public Expenditure.

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British Capitalism Since the War[1]

Part One—Origin of the Crisis

David Purdy

(*The author is a Lecturer in Economics at Manchester University*)

This article offers a general survey rather than a detailed analysis of the development of British capitalism from 1945 to the present. It is divided into five sections. In the first some methodological points are raised which both determine the *type* of approach adopted and imply criticisms of other analyses offered by the Marxist left. The next three sections examine the three sets of forces which, it is contended, have combined with each other to define British capitalism's postwar predicament: the relative defensive strength of the British working class, the legacy of the imperialist past and the ongoing backwardness of the domestic economy. The final section presents a synopsis of the postwar period within the framework of the following sub-periods, each of which is for convenience given a characteristic label:

1. 1945-51: the postwar settlement;
2. 1951-66: the faltering boom;
3. 1966-75: economic stagnation and class deadlock;

and concludes with an assessment of current ruling class strategy and its prospects into the next decade.

1. SOME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Many of the assertions and conclusions of this article must remain highly tentative in the absence of more rigorous corroboration than has been possible here. In fact there has been surprisingly little detailed work by British Marxists on the underlying *causes* of the slow rate of growth and developing backwardness of the productive forces in postwar Britain. Hobsbawm[2] offers a convincing account of the British ruling class's long retreat into the protective cocoon of its Empire in the face of the challenge posed by new imperialist rivals before the First World War, and of its defensive and negative response to the inter-war catastrophe. Yet no one has seriously carried through this analysis into the postwar period. On the whole Marxists have been content to invoke the heritage of this prolonged historical neglect of its domestic economy to account for British capitalism's evident weakness since the war.

It is, however, clear that an adequate account of this underlying weakness cannot simply explain the present as the outcome of the past without tracing through the mediating links of consciousness and the interplay of class forces which operate in and on the present to transmit the influence of the past. To ignore the problem of mediation is to submit to fatalistic determinism, to fail to apply the central principle of historical materialism: that men make their own history, though not in conditions of their choosing. An adequate account of British capitalism's postwar development must incorporate an analysis of the policies pursued by the dominant section of capital and of the strategies followed by its political leadership.

The Domain of Analysis

It is also essential to grasp that our object of investigation belongs to the domain of concrete analysis and cannot be properly comprehended if analysis remains confined to higher, more abstract domains. Three distinct levels of analysis within Marxist political economy may usefully be distinguished. The first might be called the "principles" level and deals with the essential features of the capitalist mode as such, which differentiate it from other modes and constitute its "laws of motion". These features are present in all particular social formations which contain the capitalist mode and persist in some sense through all their stages of development. The second is the "stages" level in which distinctions are drawn between broad historical phases in the development of capitalist social formations (mercantile, small scale competitive, monopoly, state monopoly etc) while still abstracting from the experience of particular capitalisms. Finally there is the level of concrete analysis which deals with the real historical development of actual capitalist societies.

A basic fault of much Marxist writing is that the relationship between these distinct levels of analysis is misconceived. A common approach is to treat the relationship between the "principles" level and lower levels within the paradigm of "essence" and "appearance". In this approach the real world

[1] This article is a shortened version of a paper presented at the annual seminar of the Economic Advisory Committee of the CPGB held at Nottingham University, March, 27-28, 1976.

[2] E. J. Hobsbawm "Industry and Empire", Pelican, 1969.

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phenomena of actual capitalist societies merely exhibit the unfolding of the "laws of motion" revealed by "principles" analysis—the march of "Capital" through the world of capitalism as it were. For example, the "law" of the falling tendency of the rate of profit is deduced from first principles and then pronounced to be at work silent and hidden behind the events associated with, say, the epoch of colonial imperialism, or the contemporary crisis of British capitalism. In this scheme of things "principles" analysis is self-contained and self-sufficient. It tells us all we really need to know. Once grasped it can be universally applied as the master key which unlocks the gate of understanding.

This approach is irremediably idealist and reductionist. "Idealist" because it conflates the processes of logic with the processes of history. "Reductionist" because it resolves the course of capitalist development into so many phenomenal variations on an essential, unchanging theme. The distinctness and specificity of concrete analysis are lost.

To avoid these consequences Marxists have sometimes disconnected "principles" analysis from lower level analysis. Hence we find that concepts such as "value" and "surplus value" which play a crucial role in the former are conspicuous by their absence in the latter. No attempt is made to ensure theoretical continuity between different levels of analysis. Alternatively concepts deployed at the "principles" level are invoked arbitrarily and casually in concrete analysis. Marxists have, for example, often attributed the German and Japanese postwar economic "miracles" to the success of their respective ruling classes in "raising the rate of exploitation", as if this were an explanation in itself, rather than merely the positioning of a line of enquiry, an algebraic formula whose value remains uncertain.

National and International Factors

A final methodological issue with a direct bearing on the type of approach adopted here concerns the relationship between international and national factors in the analysis of the development of a particular national capitalism. Marxists frequently regard each national capitalism as subordinate to the processes of the world capitalist system. The nation state is seen as merely registering in its internal motions forces at work on a global scale. Now it is a truism that no nation state's development can be understood independently of its international context. But a *context* is precisely that and not the entire reality. As a component of an international system the nation state has to be accorded relative autonomy. This is because the nation state has been, is and will for the foreseeable future continue to be, the major effective locus for the organisation and management of economic political and ideological life. The regulatory, auxiliary, managerial and hegemonic functions performed by the national capitalist state find no parallel at the international level, which remains superstructurally primordial.

The main analytical consequence of this argument (which *politically* reveals the material basis for the pursuit of "national" roads to socialism) is that, as Gramsci put it, ". . . the international situation should be considered in its national aspect. In reality, the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is 'original' and (and in a certain sense) unique: these relations must be understood in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them."[3] The analysis of British capitalism can never be subsumed under the analysis of the world economy. The task is to locate its "originality and uniqueness."

2. THE RELATIVE DEFENSIVE STRENGTH OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

This section examines the proposition that the working class in Britain has as a generalisation been in a *structurally* stronger position to defend its interests as an economic class than its counterparts in the other advanced capitalist countries since the war, though its relative superiority in this respect has diminished since the early 1960s, as the working class elsewhere has caught up.

The emphasis here is on defensive economic strength (for example, to maintain an achieved standard of real wages or to resist efforts by capitalists to renovate and rationalise the labour process). It is obvious that the *political* development of the British working class cannot be compared to that of the countries which mobilised armed resistance to German occupation, but that is a different matter. It should also be recognised that the strength or power of any social group does not necessarily depend on the use or show of force or militancy. Gains may be acquired or preserved and losses averted simply because the enemy "volunteers" them without resistance either because of a correct estimate of the balance of forces or because of a desire to postpone or evade a struggle whose outcome is uncertain.

This means that it would be quite erroneous to judge the strength of the British working class by any of the normal indicators of *militancy* or *combativeness* such as strike frequency. Nor can the issue be settled by a simple international comparison of living standards, real wages, income shares etc. which are the outcome of *all* the forces operating on and within each national capitalism and do not depend simply on the force unilaterally

[3] A. Gramsci—"Prison Notebooks", p 240, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.

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exerted by the working class. In a declining and crisis-prone capitalism such as Britain the end-product of the totality of forces which determine the actual distribution of income and the actual balance of control in the labour process, may simply be that the working class succeeds in holding its own without registering impressive advances either absolutely or compared with those in other countries.

Economic Strength

Social power is, of course, a multi-dimensional concept. The working class in our country may be powerful in some respects and not in others, so that comparisons across countries are bound to involve a large element of judgment. Nevertheless there is an impressive case for the view that the economic strength of the British working class has been relatively greater than elsewhere.

Consider the following four rough indices of defensive capacity: (1) the extent of trade union organisation; (2) the age, experience and historical continuity of the trade union movement; (3) internal trade union unity; (4) the degree to which trade unionism has succeeded in penetrating the work-place. Along each of these dimensions the British working class has been better placed, or at least as well placed, as the working class in the other main capitalist countries.

The proportion of the labour force organised in trade unions in the UK had by the beginning of the Second World War regained its post-First World War peak after a partial collapse in the mid-1920s. Union membership continued to rise steadily during the war to reach about 45 per cent of total employees by 1945. It remained roughly on this plateau until the mid-1960s when another wave of expansion began, carrying the percentage coverage up to approximately 50 per cent today. These proportions were exceeded by a few countries (see Table 1), but were decisively ahead of those recorded in the major capitalist states.

Moreover the wartime expansion of British trade unionism occurred at a time when union organisation in the other belligerent countries, except the USA, was either destroyed or severely repressed. The defence organisations of the British working class emerged from the war stronger than before and did not require to be constructed anew as in most of Europe. More generally trade unionism in Britain has deeper historical roots behind it than in other countries. Only in Germany, the USA and Sweden could the unions claim any comparable weight of historical experience and in each case suffered special disadvantages by comparison with Britain.

The unions in Weimar Germany had been seriously divided along confessional lines and were crushed after the Nazi seizure of power. Their postwar reconstruction along non-confessional and quasi-industrial lines was carefully supervised by the Allied occupation forces, who ensured that leadership was entrusted to responsible moderates and stamped out the incipient Communist-led, workplace based movements.

Table 1
Percentage of the labour force organised in Trade Unions.

EEC countries as at end 1972	
Belgium	71
Denmark	50
Luxemburg	50
Great Britain	48
Ireland	43
Netherlands	41
West Germany	38
Italy	35
France	20
Selected Non-EEC countries as at end 1968	
Sweden	60
Austria	47
United States	22
Japan	20

Sources:
EEC: "Directory of Unions in the EEC, 1974", ed. M. Williams (Graham Trotman Dudley Publishers, 1974). "Labour force" is defined as total employees.
Non-EEC: "Comparative Labour Movements", A. Sturmthal (Wadsworth, California 1972). "Labour force" is undefined.

Note:
International comparisons of the extent of unionisation amongst the potential membership of trade unions are difficult because methods of counting members vary across countries and because definitions of unionisable potential also vary. The above figures provide a very rough approximate ranking of countries by degree of unionisation.

Trade Unions Compared

In the United States, *mass* trade unions, embracing unskilled as well as skilled workers, were essentially a phenomenon of the 1930s. They depended for their growth during this period (from 3 million in 1933 to 9 million in 1939) on the continued support of the Roosevelt Administration against the bitter hostility of important ruling class circles, who had never accommodated to voluntary collective bargaining as the normal method of regulating certain aspects of employment relationships. Moreover because of the prolonged weight of the agricultural sector in the American economy, the urban industrial proletariat never formed a majority of the population. Politically, organised labour was compelled to rely on alliances with other social groups, notably small farmers and sections of the intelli-

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gentsia to achieve even the most minimal influence on the state. This factor, combined with the extreme ethnic and racial heterogeneity of the labour force, encouraged the tendency of American labour leaders to see themselves merely as leaders of one of several competing groups in society, concerned to obtain the best sectional deal they could. Moreover the American proletariat's permanent minority position and its ideological undevelopment left it vulnerable to capitalist hostility when the New Deal alliance broke down after the war.

The Swedish trade union movement most closely approximates the British in its structural strength. It established an independent existence by the 1920s, has not suffered the splits which have weakened unions elsewhere, and its coverage of the labour force is amongst the highest in the world. The key difference from Britain is that Sweden has been governed continuously since 1932 by the Social Democratic Party. At least up to the late 1960s the fundamentally strong Swedish working class was successfully integrated into a managed capitalist system. The evident success of Swedish reformism in its own terms, the close links of personnel and ideology between the ruling Social Democratic Party and the trade union movement, the highly centralised structure of Sweden's trade union and employers' organisations, and the astute accommodation made by Swedish capitalists to the social democratic regime, all contributed to this result.

Britain's trade union movement has not been crippled by the internal divisions which have beset unions in several other major capitalist states. In France and Italy political rivalries within a trade union movement which was hardly robust in the first place, were at their height during the later 1940s and 1950s, precisely the period when big capital and its political leadership were modernising and rationalising their economies. The Japanese trade unions, although not divided along European lines, have nevertheless been the most highly fragmented in the world, mostly confined in their coverage to a single enterprise, often little better than company unions and lacking any effective co-ordinating centre. Despite an extensive *political* radicalisation in the immediate postwar period, the Japanese working class suffered major defeats in the face of the drive of the US authorities to reconstruct capitalist production and social relations, which helped to clear the way for Japanese capital's great leap forward in the 1950s. Even in the United States the labour movement was until the mid-1950s still suffering from the after-effects of the historic split between the AFL and the CIO, and, as a relatively young movement, was still afflicted by the growing pains of inter-union rivalry which inevitably accompany the early stages of union growth.

At the Point of Production

Finally, the British trade union movement has been unequalled in the degree to which it has succeeded in penetrating and establishing partial control at the point of production itself via the system of shop steward organisation and the associated development of workplace bargaining. Comparative evidence on the degree of shop steward or equivalent workplace organisation is hard to come by, but some telling illustrations may be cited. In West Germany union organisation at plant and local branch level has always been weak. Partly this is because collective bargaining has been centralised around a normal pattern of multi-employer negotiations on a district-wide, single-industry basis. Partly it is because German unions have traditionally been less concerned with collective bargaining than with achieving influence and benefits through political processes focused on the state. But this long standing impotence at plant level has been greatly reinforced by the institution (legally obligatory in plants over a minimum size) of the Works Council. The Councils, which are entirely autonomous, even though their elected members are usually also union members, have frequently been unwilling or unable to co-operate with the unions, and have generally been more amenable to the paternalistic influence of the management. In the 1950s and early 1960s the unions suffered a progressive fall in membership, which was widely attributed to their remoteness from the workplace. In response to this situation I. G. Metall, the giant metal workers' union began to build up a network of its own shop stewards alongside and sometimes in opposition to the Works Councils.

Similar weaknesses at plant level were characteristic of France and Italy until very recently. It required the momentous events of May and June 1968 to achieve as an unforeseen by-product legislation explicitly permitting union sections to operate inside French plants, a demand which had long been on the unions' agenda but which they had previously had little hope of winning. In fact the unofficial strikes which swept across Europe in 1968-9 are decisive evidence for the view argued here. Both the tactics (spontaneous factory occupations) and the demands (participation in France and articulated bargaining in Italy) pursued by the working class during the 1968 events in France and the "hot autumn" of 1969 in Italy, were indicative of previous weaknesses in economic class organisation. They reflected the relative isolation of the union leaderships from their base and the desire of the rank and file for at least some degree of control over the process of production in the face of the employers' efforts to rationalise and reorganise the labour process.

The political drama and explosive quality of these

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industrial revolts, which seriously shook the French and Italian bourgeoisies, causing them to capitulate very quickly to the workers' demands, should not be allowed to obscure the light which they shed on the prior economic disabilities of the working class in these countries, themselves a contributory cause of revolt. It is also significant that the repercussions of these events spread rapidly to West Germany and Sweden, previously upheld as havens of industrial peace.

Level of Employment

So far none of this argument has rested on the existence of relatively full employment since the Second World War, which is usually, and correctly, cited to account for the changed balance of strength between labour and capital in the advanced bourgeois democracies. Obviously inasmuch as full employment has been common to most of these countries, it clearly cannot confer any special advantage on the British working class, though the previous discussion might lead one to expect that the British working class would be in a better position to utilise the opportunities which the environment of full employment provided. But the situation is not as simple as this. In the period from the end of the war up to the mid-1960s only Japan, France and Sweden of the countries under review, experienced levels of unemployment comparable to those in Britain. In the USA, Canada and Italy the level of unemployment throughout the postwar period has been substantially higher than in Britain, whilst in West Germany the unemployment rate was more than double the British rate until 1956 as West Germany absorbed some 13 million refugees from the GDR and the rest of Eastern Europe.

Moreover in Britain the ruling class had in the course of the war entered an overt political commitment to preserve full employment after the war by means of Keynesian policies of demand management. This commitment, which it was politically impossible not to honour, was part of the price paid for the post-war capitalist settlement. The maintenance of full employment in Britain was as much a *consequence* of working class strength as its cause. Right up to the crisis of 1973-4 adherence to a full employment regime has been a major parameter of ruling class policy.[4] The ruling class's ability to make use of unemployment and recession as a disciplinary instrument against the working class (and incidentally as a renewal mechanism for weeding out backward and inefficient firms) has been severely constrained.

World Recession

Even in the most recent period when the old style stop-go strategy became increasingly impossible because the 'go' phase of the cycle could scarcely be set in motion at all without running up against a large balance of payments deficit and a sterling crisis, the force of the full employment commitment has continued to make itself felt. It is significant that the 1973-5 recession in the world capitalist economy was entered by Britain much *later* than by other countries. The world recession was initiated (i.e. *before* the rise in the price of oil) by anti-inflationary policies in the big three capitalist states (USA, Germany and Japan). Subsequently it was anti-inflationary policies which led the main capitalist governments to refrain from using Keynesian policies in the normal anti-cyclical manner to compensate for the contractionary impact of the rise in oil prices on demand and output. And it was anti-inflationary policies which accounted for these governments' cautious attitude towards the question of restimulation once the recession was well and truly under way.

The world recession hit Britain at a politically inopportune moment. In early 1974 a Labour Government had just taken office in the wake of the defeat of its Conservative predecessor by the miners. The new government was under strong pressure from its working class base to repeal the Industrial Relations Act, phase out pay restrictions, and to make welfare concessions. At the same time it faced the prospect of confirming Britain's membership of the EEC under the guise of renegotiations at a time when the national popular mood on this issue was most uncertain. In these circumstances to follow suit with the other capitalist states by the vigorous application of contractionary measures was unthinkable. In the event some of the impact of the recession was temporarily cushioned and delayed by allowing the rise in public spending to go unchecked, despite the increase in public sector borrowing which this entailed, and despite the acceleration of inflation, which it was clear could only be abated by following the example of other countries in administering sharp deflationary pressure to the labour market. Once the government had mastered the uncertainties which attended to accession to office, public spending could be more safely cut back and the full force of the recession allowed to bite. These tactical manoeuvres indicate that although it has by now been severely compromised, the postwar commitment to a full employ-

[4] This is not to argue that the achievement and maintenance of full employment for nearly three decades was a *direct* result of demand management policy. It is more accurate to say that, aside from the role of the state in stabilising the fraction of investment carried out by the public sector, the known commitment to full employment served to underpin capitalist confidence and to encourage capital accumulation which, together with exports, kept demand and employment high by comparison with the interwar period.

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ment economy has still been exercising a lingering influence.

Economic, Political and Ideological Development

On all the dimensions of defensive economic strength discussed above, the British working class emerges with a rating which is higher than, or at least as high as, the working class in the other advanced capitalist states. In the last analysis, the separation, implied in much of the discussion, between economic strength and political and ideological development, cannot be maintained. In a severe national economic crisis the unqualified assertion of corporate economic strength is bound to lead to an impasse, which can only be resolved if the working class either transcends the limits of corporatism or becomes sub-ordinated to the political and ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Either way limits will be placed on the *actual* use which is made of *potential* economic strength. But in the former case these limits are self-imposed and derive from the political and ideological imperatives of a strategy for winning governmental and state power in order to advance to socialism. In the latter case the limits are either imposed by the state or passively accepted and derive from the consent which the mass of the population repose in the existing social order.

Thus a complete analysis of the relative capacities of the working class movement in the various capitalist states requires attention to *all* the levels of the social formation—economic, political and ideological. This task has not been attempted here, but if the requirement is accepted *in principle* it indicates the lines along which future work should be directed. In the past Marxist political economy has paid too little attention to these elementary propositions: (1) that the process of material reproduction under any social system involves the reproduction of both the means and the *relations* of production; and (2) that the relations of production in *class* societies cannot be reduced to the naked coercion of one group by another, but are actively articulated through systems of political and ideological practice which have real effects on the development of the social system as a whole.

3. THE LEGACY OF IMPERIALISM

One of the many crucial strategic decisions presided over by the 1945-51 Labour governments was the firm international alignment of Britain with the USA and the formation of the Atlantic imperialist alliance. The Attlee government's acceptance of the role of junior partner to the USA which as undisputed leader of world capitalism was engaged in a global project of capitalist restoration, was only partly dictated by the need to secure an American loan to stabilise Britain's precarious external payments situation. More importantly Britain's special relationship with the USA was inspired by the vision of refurbishing Britain's old imperial role in changed world conditions. The Atlantic alliance afforded a secure framework within which the colonial empire could be successfully converted into a neo-colonial empire and the overseas operations of British big capital could be resumed and extended.

In the conditions of the 1940s and 1950s, with Britain's main economic rivals apart from the USA temporarily out of action, and judged on its own terms, this strategy for preserving the waning force of British imperialism made sense. It became an incubus on the development of British capitalism only when the conditions in which it was conceived disappeared with the redistribution of world economic power and the re-emergence of significant inter-imperialist rivalry in the 1960s. The problem was that as a set of institutions, policies and assumptions the imperial structure possessed remarkable powers of survival. The *chronic* nature of Britain's postwar economic crisis owes much to the tenacity of this imperial legacy.

Some of the burdens imposed by this legacy on the British economy have become familiar by repetition. As the USA's main ally Britain had to share the overhead costs of defending world capitalism. The proportion of GNP devoted to defence, though dwindling steadily from its peak of 10½ per cent during the Korean War, remained higher in Britain than in any major capitalist state outside the USA. Defence spending encroached on resources which could have been used to raise investment, exports or consumption, generated a growing net outflow of foreign exchange and tied up to 40 per cent of the country's scientific research workers on military projects. Similarly the continuation of the Sterling Area and of the key currency role of sterling resurrected the defence of the exchange rate into a totem of economic policy.

For 18 years after the devaluation of 1949 successive governments battled through periodic sterling crises to preserve the parity, long after it had become apparent that Britain's underlying trading performance was too weak to sustain it, subjecting the economy to the waste and uncertainties of the notorious stop-go cycle.[5] Then too, the overseas trading and investment activities of British big capital, at first oriented towards Britain's traditional privileged preserves in the Commonwealth, but later switched increasingly towards Europe and the USA, undoubtedly had debilitating consequences for the domestic economy, though the exact extent of the

[5] The long term effects of stop-go on the economy's underlying growth rate are examined in the next section on backwardness.

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damage has been exaggerated by the Left.[6] For example, the substitution by British based multinational companies of overseas production for exports from Britain, which occurred extensively from the late 1950s onwards, exacerbated the problems of closing Britain's visible trade gap.

Straitjacket of the Past

These familiar debit items in the balance sheet of British imperialism are, however, of minor importance compared with the straitjacket which the imperial past imposed on the ideology and policy responses of the ruling class and its political leadership. The transition after the war to a managed economy was carried through without any significant steps being taken to modernise and restructure Britain's productive installations. With the Empire restored in a new guise, Britain's alliance with the USA secure, her rivals in Europe and Japan incapacitated and the political risks of Labour's landslide electoral victory in 1945 neutralised, there was neither the incentive nor the will to do so. Notwithstanding the vast redistribution of economic strength wrought by the war the British ruling class showed the same complacency and defensiveness which had characterised the 1930s. Once the basic concessions involved in the post-war settlement had been yielded up, little else was changed. The new economic master, Keynes himself, had concluded the "General Theory" with the observation that it was in determining the *level* of economic activity, not its *direction* that the existing system had broken down. There was, he argued, "no reason to believe that the existing system seriously misemploys the factors of production which are in use."[7]

The first practical expression of this disavowal of active intervention by the state at industry, sector and enterprise level was the postwar Labour Government's rejection of economic planning. What was at the time called "planning" was in fact a gigantic system of ad hoc controls inherited from the war economy. The newly nationalised industries were not used as levers to bring about economic and social change. They were not even co-ordinated with each other and by the late 1940s their spending programmes were already being trimmed as an instrument of demand management. The Government's 1948 White Paper explicitly repudiated planning as anti-democratic.

Following in Labour's pioneering trail the Conservative governments of the 1950s retracted the frontiers of state intervention a little further. Monetary policy, which in its traditional forms is the most indirect of control devices, was restored to a central place in economic management. Above all, economic policy was governed by acute myopia. The emphasis might shift from decontrol in the first half of the decade to caution in the second. But the time horizon remained fixed on the next 12 months ahead, and steering was guided by the triple indicators of the current level of unemployment, the state of the reserves and the timing of the next General Election.

A Syndrome of Backwardness

The most telling index of this victory of the past over the present was the mood of revulsion and disillusion which began to grip the intelligentsia in the early 1960s. Virtually all leaders of public opinion became converted to a new approach to economic policy. In the new mood most of Britain's institutions came under critical scrutiny. The civil service was castigated for its conservatism, outmoded internal organisation and lack of contact with the world of business. Unions were condemned for their restrictive practices and untidy structure. Even industrial management was accused of clinging to the old-boy network, amateurishness, condoning inefficiency and an outdated approach to industrial relations. Eager eyes were cast on French étatism and the advanced practices of US firms.

The resolution of these problems was generally recognised to require the abandonment of arms' length government and the creation of a more active, forward-looking role for the state. The main components of this new wisdom, first taken up by the Conservatives in two new bodies affectionately christened "Nicky" and "Neddy", and then more purposively applied by Labour, were incomes policy and indicative planning. The first was aimed at controlling the steady creep of inflation as the growth of money wages repeatedly outstripped the growth of productivity. The second was aimed at improving the economy's underlying rate of growth by creating a more stable environment for private capital, achieving greater public control over the broad allocation of resources and extending the time horizon for public policy into the medium term.

But the old ways died hard. The entire social and economic system of British imperialism was locked into a syndrome of backwardness and sloth from which it could escape only in one of two conditions. Either the pressure on the ruling class, whether from the domestic labour movement, or from its rivals abroad, needed to escalate to the point where the dismantling of the imperial structure could not be avoided. Or the ruling class needed to generate from its own resources a new hegemonic strategy for adjusting to new world realities. Neither of these conditions was present with sufficient compelling force, though each was fulfilled in part.

[6] The effects of the export of capital are discussed in the next section on backwardness.

[7] J. M. Keynes—"The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money", p 379 (MacMillan, 1954).

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Conditions for New Strategy

To take the first condition: the economic pressure from the working class was certainly felt, but more as a resistance and impediment to change than as an aggressive threat. It was only at the *end* of the 1960s with the struggle around the White Paper "In Place of Strife" and the wages explosion which took off in autumn 1969, that the working class began to undertake forms of self defence which appeared directly economically and politically menacing. The domestic rate of inflation was only moderately disturbing (the average annual change in the retail price index was 3.25 per cent in the period 1960-66) and certainly not destabilising. The state of the balance of payments was weak (the current account deficit averaged —£31 million in 1961-4 and —£139 million in 1965-8), but not yet dire. The worst of the decline in corporate profitability (particularly if *after* tax profitability is considered) did not set in until the late 1960s.[8] The residual problems of colonial disengagement in the 1960s were minor compared with the trauma of France's withdrawal from Algeria. The one potentially serious crisis in Rhodesia was effectively shelved after the Smith regime's UDI, and the breakdown of Britain's established relationship with Ireland was not yet in prospect.

As regards the second condition, the launching of a new, hegemonic thrust required first a vision of the main outlines of future economic development, second, the means to make this vision effective, and third the means to make it popular and acceptable. Some kind of vision was *dimly* perceived and gropingly implemented. The 1965 National Plan was a step in the right direction though based more on faith than science. But the vision was insufficiently clear and soundly based to ensure that it was pursued with determination in the face of the vicissitudes of sterling and the balance of payments. In fact the consistent pursuit of the Plan's objectives required that sterling be jettisoned by devaluing it immediately as de Gaulle had done with the franc.[9] Instead it was the Plan which was sacrificed. With the Plan gone there was no coherent long term strategy for the economy as a whole, and policy was thrown back on to short term tactical expediency.

As far as the new policy agencies were concerned the long years of arms' length government had left a vacuum which could not be filled overnight. Again in contrast with Gaulliste France, in Britain bodies such as the NBPI and the IRC had to learn their trade from scratch as they went along and, as we have seen, were handicapped by the absence of any vision of national objectives. The NBPI did in fact play a minor vanguard role in the late 1960s, collecting and disseminating a mass of information and recommendations on matters such as payment systems, overtime working, wage structures, productivity bargaining, pricing behaviour and so on. Its work in these areas was complemented by the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations, which began to reveal the obscurities and complexities of what had been happening in British workplaces since the war. But these pockets of creative ruling class thought and energy could not throw off the deadweight of imperial ideology.

All these failures in turn destroyed the conditions for generating a popular consensus around a new course for Britain. Thus the shift in the character of the Labour Government's incomes policy away from the long term, voluntary "planned growth of incomes" to a negative policy of wage repression, not only undermined official trade union support for and confidence in the Government and the policy. It also represented a retreat from the task of mobilising consent for the idea of permanent regulation of wage bargaining. The short term use of incomes policy to beat down the rate of increase in money wages and shore up confidence in the pound, encouraged the belief that incomes policy was only an emergency measure not needed in normal times.

The way was thus paved for the succeeding Conservative Government to abandon incomes policy as an official doctrine, but now in conditions where a frontal collision with major unions over pay was the only alternative. But whereas crude class confrontationism had succeeded against the weakened trade unions of the 1920s, the Conservatives now found themselves pitted against mighty units of class strength. When incomes policy was eventually restored to the centre of the stage in 1972, inflation was raging and the battle lines in the war of attrition over the distribution of resources were firmly drawn. Given the unfavourable balance of *economic* strength in which it was now fighting, and its prior failure to remodel its class hegemony, the ruling class was in a poor position to master the developing crisis. The deep roots which fastened British capitalism to its imperial past had come to exercise a pervasive and stifling effect on its further development.

Part Two of David Purdy's article will be printed in the October issue of "Marxism Today" under the title of *Decline and Prospects*.

[8] See A. Glyn and B. Sutcliffe—"British Capitalism, Workers and Profits Squeeze" (Penguin 1972).

[9] This should not be taken to imply that price uncompetitiveness was the sole or even main reason for the persistent weakness of Britain's balance of trade, nor that, as some commentators have argued, all would have been well had sterling been devalued before 1967. Rather the rigidity of exchange rate policy was one obstacle in the way of a more comprehensive re-adjustment of economic strategy.

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Discussion on the Popular Front:

The Popular Front in Spain

A. M. Elliott

(The author was a member of the International Brigade)

One May night in 1937 I was sitting in the hold of a small merchant vessel with some twenty or thirty others, most of us young, bound from the French port of Cette to the Catalan coast. We were a multinational party—volunteers for the International Brigades—and our form of travel had been imposed upon us by the Non-Intervention Committee, a creation of the British and French governments who were doing their best to impose a blockade on the Spanish Republic, at that time fighting for its life against the combined forces of Spanish reaction and European fascism. During our voyage a miscellaneous assortment of weapons were handed out to those who confessed to having, or pretended to have, a knowledge of such things. We were not given those weapons in order to defend ourselves against Franco's forces but because of possible trouble with members of the POUM and anarcho-syndicalists who had just carried out a putsch in Barcelona against the Republican authorities.

The Poumists—members of the small Working-Class Party of Marxist Unification (with the initials POUM in Spanish)—had joined the Spanish Popular Front when it was formed, but had now, in alliance with some anarchist elements, embarked on an armed struggle against the government of the Popular Front with such slogans as "Bury the Madrid Parliament!" "Madrid! The tomb of fascism. Catalonia! The tomb of the government." In the POUM there was a strong blend of adventurism and Trotskyist tendencies (although Trotsky himself vigorously denounced the party and its leaders on many occasions). The anarchists, for their part, were bent on establishing their own particular brand of "libertarian communism". Already, when we were still in France, we had been warned that we might have trouble with anarchist and Poumist "patrols" which saw the International Brigades as enemies.

As it happened, we did not encounter any trouble, but I have mentioned the episode here lest the reader should think, in the light of what follows, that I am viewing the Spanish Popular Front and its history through rose-coloured spectacles. Some of the problems and obstacles that the Popular Front was up against in building anti-fascist unity forced themselves on us before we even reached Spain.

No, everything was not smooth and easy. In fact, almost nothing was. Yet taking it all in all, the achievements of the Popular Front in Spain were truly remarkable in building the unity of the anti-fascist forces, in carrying through revolutionary changes, in waging an heroic military struggle for nearly three years against the combined might of European fascism and in setting an example which helped to inspire the Allied forces later in their struggle against the Hitler armies.

World War Delayed

When the Spanish people took up their armed struggle against fascism, first in the Asturian rising in October 1934 and then against Franco and the other rebel generals in July 1936, a dangerous myth of fascist invincibility had been taking shape. The great German working-class movement had been defeated. So, too, had the Austrian workers, in spite of their brave resistance. But the fight of the Spanish people showed that resistance and victory were possible and that the civilian population could stand up to shelling and terror bombing and all the other devilish devices in the nazi arsenal.

In a real sense the Spanish people repaid the Soviet Union in some measure for the aid it so generously gave them in terms of weapons, volunteers, military advisers and international support. The years of the Spanish Republic's resistance delayed the fascist dictators' plans for launching world war and gave the Soviet Union additional time to prepare to meet the threat. Even the splendid morale of the defenders of Stalingrad and Leningrad was inspired to some extent by the Spanish people's example, with which they had become familiar through the front-line dispatches from Mikhail Koltsov published in *Pravda* and from Ilya Ehrenburg in *Izvestia*. That example and that inspiration stood the Soviet people in good stead in the darkest days of the war. "The front," wrote Koltsov, "stretches from the trenches of Madrid, passes through the whole of Europe . . . there is nowhere to provide a refuge for any-

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one who wants only silence, tranquillity and neutrality."[1]

There is a great deal still to be learned today from the experience gained in the days of the Spanish Popular Front in building unity of action and mutual trust between very diverse social and political forces. Not that the experience of the Popular Front can or should be mechanically copied today, when many things have changed and a much wider unity is possible in the interests of progress and socialism in many countries, including Spain. That would naturally be counter-productive, just as it would be foolish to copy mechanically the experience of any other of the world's great revolutionary struggles.

First People's Democratic Revolution in Europe

In Spain the people, whose political expression was the Popular Front, uniting communists, socialists, anarchists, republican parties of the petty-bourgeoisie and Basque and Catalan nationalists, answered the fascist rebellion by taking over the factories that had been abandoned by their former owners, carried out agrarian reform and distributed the land of the big estates among the poor peasants and landless agricultural workers. They created a new People's Army, a new police force and a new system of justice—in short, a new state. Power was in the hands of the people and after the initial stages of the war the governments of the Popular Front were always headed by socialists (first of all Largo Caballero and then Juan Negrín). And the great majority of Spanish socialists, it should be remembered, were in favour of revolution.

As Santiago Carrillo, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, has put it:

> "The victory of the Popular Front was the victory of a political formation which had pledged itself to change that oligarchic system and to establish a real democracy in Spain. And the property-owning classes of those days, who had their hands on the state apparatus even though not on the government, prepared the uprising in order to thwart that policy of structural reform. For us communists it was a question of putting into operation a policy which would have brought us to a genuine democracy. So when the fascists launched that rebellion at the origin of which the interests of the Hitler-Mussolini axis found themselves wedded to those of the reactionary forces in Spain, it was really the whole political and social system which was at stake and that is why the war in Spain, waged by the Popular Front, was from the outset a revolution: the land was given to the peasants, while respecting the property of small and medium owners; the big industries of the country came under workers' control; the administrative apparatus and the machinery of justice were transformed; a state administration was created which was popular in character. In Spain, at that time, the first people's democratic revolution in Europe was therefore carried out."[2]

A New State Power

Stressing the role of the Popular Front and of the Popular Front committees which existed through Republican Spain, Santiago Carrillo says:

> "In Spain we did not have institutions like the Soviets, but there was the Popular Front and it was the real power of the Revolution. At government level, when questions were raised, it was the political forces of the Popular Front which met and decided on the options. That is to say that the government of that period served the options of the Popular Front, which had been created from the very first day of the struggle and which also existed in the provinces and the regions, relying on the new power structures, the committees at the factories and in the countryside, the new People's Army. . . . It really was a new state power."[3]

That, of course, is not exactly the picture of the Popular Front and the war in Spain which you will get from the great majority of books on the subject which you can pick up in the public libraries. It is our misfortune, and to some extent our shame, that the large majority of political and historical studies of this period have been written by rightists or "leftists" and one of the most useful works, written from a Marxist point of view, the three-volume *Guerra y Revolución en España* (Progress Publishing House, Moscow), compiled by a commission with Dolores Ibárruri as its chairman, has not been brought out in an English-language edition.

The Popular Front reached a much more advanced level in Spain than in France and yet it is of France that people mostly think when they speak about the Popular Front period. It is to be hoped that with the return of democracy to Spain it may be rather easier, or at least less difficult, to fill in the gaps, especially where the Popular Front at a local level is concerned, a field in which it is vital that the work should be done while some, at any rate, of the principal participants are still alive.

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[1] Giuseppe Boffa—*Storia dell'Unione Sovietica*, Rome, 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 511-2

[2] Santiago Carrillo—*Demain l'Espagne (entretiens avec Régis Debray et Max Gallo)*, Paris, 1974, pp. 159-60. This book has just been published by Lawrence and Wishart (London) with the title *Dialogue on Spain*.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 161

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A Precious Experience

The Popular Front period in Spain is a mine of precious experience which is of special interest and relevance in Western Europe today, now that problems of uniting the progressive forces are being posed in such a sharp and urgent way, notably in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.

In Spain during the period from 1934 to 1939 the Popular Front was formed, representing working-class, petty-bourgeois and some bourgeois forces, and it came to power along a parliamentary road through democratic elections early in 1936. It governed the country for three years, carrying through revolutionary changes, and held in check the combined forces of Spanish and international fascism. And the fascism of Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain was objectively aided by Britain, France and the United States, with their policy of Non-Intervention which denied the Spanish Republic the elementary rights which belonged to it under international law. Rightly seen, this history of the Popular Front is one of very great successes won in the teeth of terrible odds. But for all too many people, who see only the final outcome of the drama—the black night of fascist rule and a stage littered with a million corpses—it is a tale of useless sacrifice, disunity, betrayal and defeat.

From their various standpoints, both bourgeois and "leftist" historians and propagandists (and in this field it is particularly hard to distinguish between the history and the propaganda in the most negative sense) have laboured mightily to create and perpetuate just that picture, having in common one central aim—to discredit and denigrate the Spanish Popular Front and everyone who supported it to the end, including, above all, the Spanish Communist Party and, of course, the Soviet Union. The history of the Spanish people's struggle was grossly distorted in order to serve the ends of the protagonists of the cold war and it is now being distorted with equal fervour in order to suit those who, for one reason or another, want to discredit the very idea that parties, organisations and individuals, with different political beliefs, can work together in good faith and go forward successfully along the paths of democracy and socialism.

Historic Distortions

Two main lines of attack have been employed, with various permutations and combinations as regards details. The one from the right maintains that the communists worked with ruthless cunning and a network of pliant puppets to crush all rivals and establish their own dictatorship, thinly disguised under trappings of Republican legality. The second line of attack, much favoured by the "left" in all its various shapes and sizes (Trotskyists *pur sang,* New Left, ex-communists, and so on), is to claim that the communists, working under orders from the Communist International and the Soviet Union, betrayed the proletarian revolution which, so they say, could and should have been carried out in Spain. This was done primarily, so they claim, in order to suit Stalin's *Realpolitik* and the Popular Front was the instrument of the betrayal. They allege that the interests of the Spanish workers were sacrificed to those of the bourgeoisie and that the revolutionary *élan* of the Spanish masses was destroyed in an effort to achieve respectability in the eyes of the governments of Britain, France and the United States.

The picture of the Popular Front that is unfolded is, in the main, one of splits and internecine struggle. A simple rule of thumb is followed: "Go and see what little Johnny [in this case the Spanish Communist Party and/or the Soviet Union] is doing and tell him it's wrong."

With some honourable exceptions, "leftists" and right-wing historians are united in presenting the role of the Soviet Union, the only loyal friend which the Spanish Republic had among the major powers, as an exercise in sordid opportunism, culminating in cynical abandonment when the tide had finally turned against the Republic—a story which is emphatically refuted by all the evidence. When I read these tales, I remember an occasion during the last days of the resistance on the Catalan front, in February 1939, when I saw the eagerness with which Republican soldiers opened up crates containing new Soviet weapons that the French authorities had at long last reluctantly allowed across the frontier—too late, unhappily, to change the military situation.

A "primitive" and, I would say, *relatively* honest version of some aspects of the "leftist" line found literary expression quite early in the day in George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia,* which is unfortunately almost the only account of the Spanish War which many English-speaking people have read. George Orwell, who served as a volunteer in the POUM militia on the Aragon front, at least made no pretence to omniscience but rather emphasised his ignorance of political questions in Spain: "When I came to Spain, and for some time afterwards, I was not only uninterested in the political situation but unaware of it. I knew there was a war on, but I had no notion what kind of a war."[4] "The revolutionary atmosphere of Barcelona had attracted me deeply, but I had made no attempt to understand it."[5] He explained that he

[4] George Orwell—*Homage to Catalonia,* Penguin Books, p. 46

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 47

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had only joined the POUM militia rather than any other because he had happened to arrive in Barcelona with papers from the Independent Labour Party.

All along his position was ambiguous. The call of the POUM, with which Orwell ostensibly sympathised, in the Barcelona putsch of May 1937 was for proletarian revolution and workers' power. Yet Orwell wrote: "Even when the workers had the power to do so, they did not overthrow or completely replace the Government. Obviously they could not do so when Franco was hammering at the gate and sections of the middle class were on their side." He drew attention to the inactivity on the Aragon front and to the scarcity of Russian arms there and at the same time said: "Meanwhile the workers had weapons in their hands, and at this stage they refrained from giving them up. (Even a year later it was computed that the Anarcho-Syndicalists in Catalonia possessed 30,000 rifles."[6] It was scarcely likely, after all, that the Republican Government would be anxious to supply quantities of Soviet arms to those who were hoarding them behind the lines for purposes which were not avowed but could easily be imagined.

As for Orwell's support of the POUM, it seems to have been far from whole-hearted, to judge by a letter which he wrote to Frank Jellinek late in 1938: "I entirely agree with you that the whole business about the POUM has had far too much fuss made about it and that the net result of this kind of thing is to prejudice people against the Spanish Republic . . . [In my book] . . . I've given a more sympathetic picture of the POUM line than I actually felt, because I always told them they were wrong and refused to join the party. But I had to put it as sympathetically as possible, because it has had no hearing in the Capitalist Press and nothing but libels in the Left-Wing Press. . . ."[7]

Unity in Process

It is a feature of much, indeed most, of the "leftist" criticism of the Popular Front and the Communist Party of Spain that the Spanish War and its exigencies are virtually ignored and so, too, is the struggle to prevent a world war, which played a foremost part in the thinking of anti-fascists of all countries in those days. Orwell himself at least appreciated that ". . . if the war was lost democracy and revolution, Socialism and Anarchism, became meaningless words."[8]

For the anti-fascist forces to have alienated any support which they could obtain, either in Spain or internationally, would obviously have been the height of folly. Yet the POUM and a substantial section of the anarchists did precisely that. Exponents of "libertarian communism" carried out "revolutionary" experiments calculated to alienate the middle sections of the population and many workers, wantonly wounding religious sentiments, and, where they had the power, carrying out a policy of forced collectivisation and expropriation in the countryside, incurring the enmity of large sections of the peasantry, from whose ranks a big proportion of the soldiers of the People's Army were drawn.

It is very important, I believe, to emphasise something which very often gets overlooked, even in honest accounts of the Spanish War and the Popular Front period—the genuine comradeship, friendliness and mutual respect which developed between supporters of the different political parties and organisations as they worked and fought for the common cause. This was extremely widespread, not only among rank-and-file workers and soldiers but among leaders, too. It was the complete opposite of the picture which enemies of the Popular Front like to present: a dog-eat-dog situation of ill-will, with everyone rejoicing at the other fellow's misfortunes and busily employed in digging pits for him to fall into.

Of course, comradeship and trust were sometimes misplaced and friendship was sometimes met with betrayal, but all in all an atmosphere of goodwill prevailed in which the prime aim was not to score off the other teams but to further the common cause. Politics, sometimes seen only as a process of fission, could be seen to be also a process of fusion, of coming together and learning to understand and appreciate one another's qualities and contributions.

In general, relations between the communists and socialists were very good and relations with the anarcho-syndicalists improved to a degree that might earlier have seemed to be inconceivable.

In the final stages of the war, as defeat began to appear inevitable, this unity did indeed become sadly eroded, but that was the fault, not of the Popular Front as such, but of the overwhelming military force that was brought to bear against the Republic.

Difficulties, disappointments and defeats were many and bitter. Given their clear conception of the course which had to be followed from a military point of view if there was to be any chance of winning the war, and given their great political influence and military strength, the Spanish communists would have been more than human if the temptation to "go it alone", to a greater or lesser extent, did not fleetingly occur to one or other of them from time to time. It was always quickly

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 54 and 49-50

[7] Kingsley Martin—*Editor*, London, 1968, p. 215 (footnote)

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 54

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dismissed as the dangerous delusion which it was.

Santiago Carrillo recounts one instance in which General Miaja, then in command of the Republican forces at Madrid, played the role of tempter:

> "I remember a meeting of the political bureau in Valencia at the time of the crisis of the Largo Caballero government. . . . General Miaja telephoned from Madrid to say to us: 'Take power. The Army of the Centre is with you.' It wasn't our own people, it wasn't communists, but professional military men who were asking us to take power in order to 'establish order'.
>
> "At that moment we had control of the tanks, the air force and the strongest military units and here was a situation in which the military leaders in command of the other units were inviting us to take power. We discussed this for five minutes, no longer, and reached the conclusion: 'It's madness; if we take power, then that's the end of the Popular Front; we shall have to kill quite a lot of people and we shall bring about the defeat of the Republic.'
>
> "We could have decided to take power; it was technically possible, but we were agreed that all the chances of victory in the war and the revolution lay in preserving the Popular Front and maintaining the unity of the popular forces. I don't know whether another party, in our position, would have resisted as we did the temptation to take power."[9]

The Stage of the Struggle

On March 23, 1938, at a very difficult time for the Spanish Republic, when it was suffering severe military reverses and voices were being raised in favour of compromise and capitulation, an article appeared in the Spanish Communist Party's newspaper *Mundo Obrero* in which it was stated, among other things:

> "It cannot be said, as one newspaper has done, that the only solution for our war is that Spain should not be fascist or communist, because that is the way France wants it."

To this the general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, José Díaz, replied on March 30, in an open letter to the editorial board of *Mundo Obrero* published under the heading "With All Possible Clarity":

> "I do not know what newspaper it is that your argument is directed against. It may be that the newspaper concerned is produced by people who do not like our Party and do not have a proper understanding of the problems of our war. But the statement that *'the only solution for our war is that Spain should not be fascist or communist'* is entirely correct and accords precisely with our Party's position."

And he went on:

> "This must be repeated once again, so that not the slightest doubt about it remains. The people of Spain is fighting in this war *for its national independence and in defence of the democratic Republic.* It is fighting to drive the barbarous German and Italian invaders from our soil; it is fighting because it does not want Spain to be transformed into a colony of fascism; it is fighting so that Spain shall not be fascist. It is fighting for liberty, in defence of the democratic and republican régime, which is our country's lawful régime and one which permits of the broadest social progress.
>
> "The Communist Party, which is, jointly with the Socialist Party, the Party of the Spanish working class, does not have, and cannot have, interests or aims that are different from those of the people as a whole. Our Party has never thought that the solution to this war can be the establishment of a communist régime. If the working-class masses, the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie follow us and give us their love, that is because they know that we are the staunchest defenders of national independence, of liberty and of the Republican constitution. That defence is the foundation, the very content of our policy of unity and the Popular Front. And it would be a very serious thing, it would be inadmissible, if there were to be in the ranks of our Party, I will not say any vacillation, but simply any lack of clarity on this question, especially at the present moment, when the maximum unity of the people is necessary in order to stand up to the savage attacks of the foreign invaders. In our country there exist today objective conditions which render absolutely essential, in the interests of the whole people, the existence and strengthening of a democratic régime; conditions which might make it possible to think of establishing a communist régime do not exist. I want to go further and say that if at this time, when the task is to mobilise up to the very last man in a supreme effort to resist the offensive launched by the invader . . . if there could be any thought of a modification of our Party's tactics, then this would take the form, not of measures that might restrict the basis for the people's unity, but of measures that would make it still broader."

José Díaz also took exception to another phrase in the article which said that "the Spanish people will be victorious with the opposition of capitalism". To this he objected on the grounds that it was contrary to the policy of the Communist Party of Spain and of the Communist International as it had been expressed in a report which he himself had given in November 1937, when he had said: "There is one sphere in which all the demo-

[9] Santiago Carrillo: *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

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cratic states can unite and take joint action. This is the sphere of the defence of their own existence against the enemy of all of them: fascism; it is the sphere of defence against the war that threatens all of us. . . ." "The way in which you pose the question," said José Díaz in his open letter to the editorial board, "would inevitably lead, once again, to restricting the front of our struggle, at a time when it must be extended. The task of organising international aid for Spain at this tragic moment in her history falls principally on the international working class and its organisations, but the measures that can be taken to convince other forces, not belonging to the working class, but to the petty-bourgeoisie and the democratic and liberal bourgeoisie, of the need for this aid cannot fail to have our approval."[10]

National Unity

That further broadening of unity in face of the foreign invaders to which José Díaz referred found expression in the concept of National Union. In a lecture which he gave in Barcelona on November 29, 1938, he said:

> "National Unity is not just any kind of political or parliamentary formation: it is the grouping together of the whole people when the commonwealth is in peril, as also are the country's independence, its territorial integrity and Spain's very existence as a state. For that reason, when we speak of national unity, we look not only towards those who, on our territory, must be united in order to bar the way to the invader, but especially to those on the other side of the trenches."

He stressed the great responsibility of the working class in strengthening this National Union and said:

> "But this role of the working class as a guide by no means signifies—let this be clearly understood—any contempt or underestimation of the other classes which are taking part in the common cause and which have their tasks and their responsibilities.
>
> "Nothing must prevent perfect harmony between the working class and the other forces, especially the petty-bourgeoisie, from being maintained at all times.
>
> "It is the enemy, interested as he is in breaking the people's unity, who is putting around the lie that tomorrow, when the danger is over, a struggle of each against all will begin, a struggle of each force against the rest.
>
> "I am convinced that the experience derived from united action today, far from falling into the void, will create lasting mutual understanding, so that when fascism has been defeated, we must go forward united to rebuild our country, to make of Spain solely and exclusively what the Spanish people wants."[11]

Bearing Fruit Today

When José Díaz gave that lecture, the Spanish War was approaching its end. The Munich betrayal had taken place and not only Hitler and Mussolini, but the British and French governments as well, were in a desperate hurry to bring the Spanish drama to a close. The dominant section of the British ruling class did not even begin to open their eyes to Britain's real national interests until considerably later, when Chamberlain was replaced by Churchill and Britain herself was at war with Hitler. In Spain the overwhelming superiority of the fascist forces in armaments—the fruit of German and Italian aid and of the British and French governments' policy of blockade (conducted under the euphemism of "Non-Intervention")—was at last breaking down the long resistance of the Spanish people and within four months Barcelona and Madrid had fallen to the enemy and the night of fascism had set in over Spain. But the concept of National Union, as outlined by José Díaz, was to play its part in other countries of Europe in the victorious struggle against the fascist powers in the Second World War.

Nor is it fanciful to believe that the traditions of the Popular Front and National Union are bearing fruit today, in the new conditions in Spain which have followed the death of Franco, and in the tasks which the democratic forces of Spain, ranging over a much wider social and political spectrum than they did in the days of the Popular Front, have set themselves in their struggle against Franco's heirs.

[10] Quotations from the open letter of José Díaz are taken from the collection of his speeches and articles entitled *Tres Años de Lucha*, Toulouse, 1947, pp. 461-3.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 497-9

(*Continued from p. 296*)

political debate. The prevalence of such practices, or otherwise, in bourgeois parties and right-wing trade union groups is of course totally irrelevant.

John Gollan has placed the British left in his debt by opening a debate on the 20th Congress in terms which, while honestly dealing with past mistakes and crimes, adhere firmly to a Marxist position devoid of anti-Sovietism. But the practical consequences of his analysis have to be pursued consistently. There must be a rigorous clean-up of our polluted Marxist heritage, so that every term we use, every procedure we follow, every concept we think we understand, is forced to submit its Marxist credentials.

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Document:

Manifesto - Programme of the Communist Party of Spain (II)

(We print below a second selection of extracts from the Manifesto—Programme of the Communist Party of Spain, adopted at its Second National Conference in September 1975. These extracts are taken from Section III of the Programme. The main headings are from the text, the subheads are ours. The translation is by Nan Green. The first selection of extracts was printed in the August issue of Marxism Today.)

THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MODERN DEVELOPMENT FOR SPAIN AND THE FASCIST RÉGIME. THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

The Pact for Freedom

Both the fundamental contradiction between proletariat and bourgeoisie and the contradiction between the anti-monopoly classes and strata and the political and economic power of the monopolies are today disguised, obscured, for vast sections of the people and of the working class by the existence of Franco's fascist dictatorship and by the total absence of democratic liberties. *In practice, until such time as this mortgage is paid off, until such time as the people regain democratic liberties, the revolutionary prospect will continue to be shut off for millions of men and women who should logically support it.*

The Communist Party of Spain considers that the first task to be accomplished is the conquest of political liberties.

In actual fact, in the course of the recent years of intense capitalist growth, a contradiction has been taking shape between the needs of national development and the fascist structure of the régime.

This contradiction affects, in the first place, the working class and the forces of culture, who need freedom, each in their own sphere; it affects the poor and middle peasants who in practice have no means of defence against the policy of the financial and landowning oligarchy, which is driving them methodically and implacably from their land; it affects broad sections of the agrarian bourgeoisie, who resent monopoly exploitation, foreign competition, the difficulties which stand in the way of obtaining access to the European market and the lack of a genuine policy for the encouragement of crop farming and animal husbandry.

In addition to this, however, the most dynamic of the entrepreneurs, who are associated with the growth of recent years, are also aware that in this period of accelerating competition and concentration the fascist structures do not assist the functioning of the economic and social factors that have been the driving force of capitalist expansion in other countries. Moreover, these structures are an obstacle to negotiating in the Common Market, in connection with which we Spaniards suffer from practically all the disadvantages without having access to the possible advantages.

At the same time the negative ideological consequences of the Hitlerite origin of the present régime in Spain can be seen in its contacts with foreign countries by a rising generation which did not take part in the war and does not hold itself responsible for the outcome of that war.

Thus, the gulf between contemporary Spanish society and the régime which arose out of the fascist victory of 1939 and which has persisted to the present day has reached immense proportions.

The Democratic Junta

Basing itself on this situation, the Communist Party of Spain is advocating a democratic alternative which can provide a way out of the present situation in the interest of the masses of the people and, at the same time, can facilitate a convergence of those forces of various kinds that are interested in bringing an end to the dictatorship—a very broadly-based convergence which will not prejudge either the political régime or the future social transformations, leaving these questions to be solved within a democratic framework.

The essential points of the possible convergence which the Communist Party of Spain singles out are the following:

1. A broad provisional coalition government.
2. A complete amnesty for political prisoners and exiles.
3. Political liberties without any discrimination.
4. Recognition of the specific national in-

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dividuality of Catalonia, Euzkadi (the Basque Country) and Galicia, through provisional application of the Statutes of Autonomy brought into force or made the subject of a plebiscite in the 1930s.

5. Free elections to a Constituent Cortes (Parliament) which will determine Spain's future political régime.

The proposals of the Communist Party of Spain would make it possible to pass from fascist dictatorship to democracy, carrying out a real political revolution with the least possible violence and eliminating the danger of a new civil war.

The Democratic Junta of Spain expresses this need. Its platform includes the essential measures for putting an end to the dictatorship and establishing in Spain a situation of democratic liberties which will enable the people to decide their own destiny.

The Democratic Junta has launched throughout the whole country a unitary, broad, offensive dynamic, capable of bringing together and co-ordinating all the forces standing for a genuine democratic alternative, of weakening and isolating the "ultra" elements, and of exposing the pseudo-liberal fraud of Juan Carlos's "continuity".

The Democratic Junta stimulates and motivates the deployment of broad militant mass movements which are preparing for a national democratic action able to put an end to dictatorial power.

The growing convergence of forces around the Democratic Junta, the leading role of the masses which it aids and stimulates, create conditions in which a part of the state apparatus could lean towards democracy, in which the Army would not oppose the will of the vast majority of Spanish society but would accept and even assist the democratic change which will restore to the people the exercise of sovereignty.

Faced with the way of political revolution, of the democratic breakthrough which the Junta personifies, the Francoist elements are trying to secure the *continuity* of the present régime with the succession of Juan Carlos. This situation presents itself with two faces: one more rigid, "bunkerised", and the other claiming to be an *opening up*.

Democratic Alternative

Against any and every "continuist" form, our solution will continue to be the democratic alternative. The succession of Juan Carlos, which could be decreed at any time by the present authority, will not resolve the country's problems; it will increase political confusion and instability and it will not prevent the triumph of freedom. It will produce a further weakening of the oligarchy and will radicalise the forces of the people.

When that happens, with the whole power-structure weakened by the disappearance of Franco, and notwithstanding reactionary manoeuvres, the masses, surging forward on the present tide of militancy, will errupt into the streets in all their vigour, to impose the democratic objectives which Spanish society demands, culminating in the political revolution which will sweep away all the remnants of dictatorial power.

The achievement of these freedoms will mean that two possible paths of development will open before our country:

1. The path of development towards social and political democracy, that is to say, the development of the initial political revolution in a social direction.
2. The path of neo-capitalist development.

Whether Spain takes the first or the second path will depend on the ability or the inability of the socialist forces to unite and to win the support of the non-monopoly sections and, in the final count, on the democratic will of the people.

The Role of Mass Movements in the Struggle for Freedom and for Social and Political Democracy

When we put forward the *Pact for Liberty*, as far as can be foreseen at present, as a *convergence*, we want to underline the *transitory* nature of that agreement. Indeed, the forces which can agree on it are so varied and their class structure is so opposed that it is only possible to conceive their concurrence as a factor determined by the existence in power of an anachronism which has been inherited from the period of Hitler and Mussolini and which must be got rid of: Franco's fascist dictatorship.

The essential task of the *Pact for Liberty* is to put an end to the consequences and vestiges of the Civil War, to work out a new democratic political framework in keeping with the general demands for freedom, and to act as a kind of electoral platform ensuring that recourse will be had to universal suffrage in conditions of respect for all the political and social groups which have a *real* existence in the country, without discrimination.

Once these tasks are accomplished, the basic contradictions existing in our society will become clearer, and the Communist Party and other socialist and democratic forces, no longer underground, will be able to establish more direct links with the working class and the broad masses of the people, and to ensure their greater and more responsible participation in the running of the country.

At that stage a new process of differentiation will take place; on the one hand the forces which are determined to direct the development of the country along the neo-capitalist road will rally

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their ranks; on the other hand, there will be those of us who propose to direct it along a non-monopolistic road, a road of social and political democracy.

The conditions for a real and lasting alliance between the working class, the peasants, the forces of culture, the middle strata of professional people, white-collar workers and civil servants and the non-monopolistic bourgeoisie are becoming clearly apparent.

In face of the danger which this alliance constitutes for them, the representatives of monopoly capital will use any and every means, ranging from demagogy to threats, and including fraudulent propaganda and misrepresentation of the real aims of the democratic forces. They will try to exploit the natural differences existing between political and social sectors of the alliance, endeavouring to transform them into antagonisms. They will try to play on manifestations of leftist impatience in order to scare the more moderate sectors, and, vice versa, to use the moderation of these latter sectors to exasperate the more leftist ones.

In these conditions, the viability and the consolidation of the alliance of anti-monopolistic forces will depend on the correct definition of its aims; on the capacity of the Communist Party and the most conscious forces to circumvent the manoeuvres of the enemy and to preserve unity in all circumstances; on the awareness created of the necessity for subordinating the partial, transient interests of this or that sector to the implementation of the programme as a whole.

As for the specific forms which the alliance of anti-monopolistic forces will take, it is not possible to determine these here and now. The essential thing is that the alliance should be capable of establishing a political power determined to carry out its programme—a power that is truly of the people.

Forms of Mass Movement

In the last few years, professional, social and political mass movements have grown up which not only occupy a fundamental place in today's struggle against the dictatorship, but will be called on to play an outstanding part throughout the whole process of building social and political democracy and socialism.

We are talking about the Workers' Commissions, the peasant movement, the student movement, that of the sailors and fishermen, the Housewives' Associations and other women's organisations, the neighbourhood associations and other community organisations, tradespeople's groups, the professional associations, the movements of civil service functionaries, the cultural and recreational bodies, and the mass organisations of all types permitted by law. Through these, people are seeking ways of organisation and collective participation which the fascist régime denies them, and they come together around their working, professional or environmental problems, taking up the defence of their immediate interests through forms of direct democracy.

In the last few years, these movements have been putting forward ever broader and more complex demands in relation to working conditions, housing, education, health, culture and environment, among other things, which reveal the growing maturity of the masses in the management of their own affairs. At the same time, the weight of the working class and the influence of democratic and socialist ideas are revealed in these movements in a wealth of different ways, showing the desire for profound change in all aspects of social life.

With the development of these mass movements, conditions are being created for the incorporation of millions of people into collective political and social activity, which could give new dimensions to civic life, not only in the present struggle for democracy but also in the process of the advance towards socialism. They offer a magnificent field for building and strengthening the alliance of all anti-monopolistic classes and sectors which is necessary for the defeat of the financial oligarchy.

The Communist Party of Spain regards it as its duty—and has been acting along these lines—to contribute towards the formation, extension and development of such movements, to their determined anti-Franco orientation, to the clarification of a common anti-monopolistic outlook. All of this, while respecting the individuality of each of these movements, their democratic character and their autonomy.

The Alliance of the Forces of Labour and Culture

In our country the motive forces of the anti-Franco struggle, those most resolutely interested in the development of Spain along the path of social and political democracy and socialism are:

In the first place, the working class. In our country it has fallen to the working class—and this has also come about because of the bourgeoisie's shirking of its revolutionary tasks—to be the principal agent of progress, both in relation to the specific tasks of the bourgeois revolution and also when the tasks of the democratic, anti-monopolistic and socialist struggle appeared on the agenda.

The working class has historically justified its role as vanguard class, as revolutionary class, from the attempts to carry through the bourgeois revolution in the middle of the 19th century up to the struggles of the present day.

The revolutionary war against fascism gave the

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working class and the masses of the people the opportunity to demonstrate their high revolutionary consciousness, their fighting spirit, their ability to assume the role of leading force in our society. Without the military intervention of the foreign fascist powers, and without the blockade imposed by the other capitalist powers under the cloak of the so-called "non-intervention" policy, the Spanish people, with the working class at their head, would have defeated fascism and Spain would have witnessed the victory of the first anti-monopolistic and anti-latifundist democracy in Europe.

Role of the Working Class

The working class suffered more than any other class in society from the terrible consequences of the defeat and the fascist terror. It was decimated, subjected to the most barbarous repression.

Nevertheless, it did not stop fighting. First, in the guerrilla forces, then in important strike movements which in Spain have acquired a breadth and persistence not previously achieved in any country ruled by fascism. Step by step, in spite of the shootings, the torture, imprisonment and large-scale sackings, the working class has been rebuilding its forces, setting an example to all democratic sections of society. Thus, even under the weight of fascism, it has succeeded in setting up its own independent organisation—the Workers' Commissions; it has encouraged other sections of society to organise their own forces and to engage in struggle; it has been at its post in the forefront.

The working class has won great prestige among the other anti-monopolistic social strata.

In developing and growing, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the working class has become the largest and most decisive class in society.

It is the class which has nothing to lose from the downfall of the fascist dictatorship, from the liquidation of the political and economic power of the monopolies, from abolition of capitalist private property; on the contrary, it has everything to gain.

Because of the special features of its position in present-day society, its relationship to the means of production and also because of its progressive and revolutionary traditions, the working class is naturally the leading class of the Spanish revolution.

We Communists are in favour of a single trade union centre: division in the trade union movement favours only the exploiting classes. But this question must be decided by the workers themselves, and neither one nor other solution—unity or pluralism—must be imposed on them by the state. If the working people opt for trade union unity, we will defend working-class democracy to ensure that all tendencies of real influence are represented, according to their strength, in the leadership of the single trade union centre.

The Peasants

In the second place come the traditional allies of the working class, the peasants. Due to their situation, condemned to being driven off the land by the concentration of ownership in the hands of the big landowners, the farming bourgeoisie and the capitalist firms; due to the piratical policy of Franco's régime which reduced their incomes to an intolerable subsistence level, and due also to the historical traditions of revolutionary struggle, the working peasants are the natural allies of the working class. During the war of 1936-39, they formed the bulk of the infantry and were the source of many talented cadres of the People's Army. Afterwards, they also provided a large part of the foremost guerrilla fighters.

The process of concentration of ownership in recent years, which has favoured the landowners and the rich farmers, has also meant that in some rural areas with a reactionary, priest-ridden tradition, the peasants' mentality has changed in a progressive direction. In the same way, the evolution of the Spanish Church and the breakdown of its most integrist ideology, with the growth of progressive currents within it, have also contributed to this change.

The peasants are also interested in the achievement of social and political democracy and socialism. Today, there are numerous signs that they are becoming aware of their situation and there are ever more frequent examples showing that this awareness is turning into action. The struggle of the peasants will be a decisive contribution to the Spanish revolution.

The Forces of Culture

In the third place, the working class and the peasants have a new and powerful ally to rely on: the forces of culture. Among the structural changes that have taken place in our country, one of the most important is the numerical growth of the forces of culture.

This growth brings corresponding changes of quality in the social situation of intellectuals and their role in production. In the past they were a social stratum closely linked with the ruling classes, mixing and integrating with them. Now, despite Spain's backwardness in relation to the scientific and technical revolution, a differentiation is beginning which will inevitably sharpen as time goes on.

The growth of the productive forces causes scientists and technicians to participate ever more directly in production. True, some of them remain socially on the side of the ruling classes, providing

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them with technocrats, managers and top officials. But the mass of scientific and technical workers, taking a more direct part in production, are becoming part of the wage-earning masses, even though their wages are higher as a rule. Like the manual worker, they must have recourse to the market to sell their labour power, and they experience capitalist exploitation and alienation, although to a lesser degree. This leads them to make demands from the capitalists and to become aware, by a process that is not always easy, of their social situation.

The situation of other intellectual sections also tends to become similar to that of those we have mentioned, because of the perceptible reduction in the liberal exercise of many professions and the transformation of a growing number of professional people into wage-earners and functionaries, and their separation from the centres of decision.

The general direction of education today is mainly determined by the demands of production. In some countries, schools and universities are now directly linked with or dependent on big firms. Their aim is to turn out skilled labour power, which is an essential force in every modern society. Teachers, therefore, are very much tied to the needs of present-day production. The same applies to professions like economics and sociology. Even doctors, with the advances in social medicine, work ever more directly to keep wage-earners in good health so that they can produce more and have less time off.

Apart from this, the numerical growth of the forces of culture means that they are joined by an increasing proportion of people from the middle strata, who own no means of production and are less socially linked to capitalist interests.

All these new structural characteristics which are being acquired by those we call *the forces of culture*, in an epoch of imperialist crisis and socialist advance, mean that broad sections of them are adopting a critical attitude not only to Franco's dictatorship but to capitalist society. Their higher educational level enables them, in many cases, to make an overall analysis of capitalist society, to discover its illogicality and decadence more easily, and to opt for socialism.

Students and Young Professional People

This attitude is more apparent in the young professional people trained in recent years, in a period of diminished national isolation and open frontiers, which has helped many of them to see the real situation not only in Spain but in the socialist and the developed capitalist countries. And it is even more apparent in the intellectuals who are undergoing their training—that is, the university students and, by extension, the sixth-formers, among whom a great many are turning towards socialist attitudes.

For all these reasons, the forces of culture are already playing an important role in the ideological and political mass struggle.

Most spectacular and active is the participation of the students, for whom concentration in their thousands and tens of thousands in the faculties and colleges offers greater and more effective political contact at times of mass action; this concentration is comparable in effect to that of workers in the big industrial enterprises.

Besides a constantly growing mass strength, the support for working-class struggle which can be provided by the presence of engineers and technicians in sectors of the productive apparatus who, at times—as in the case of electronics experts who control computers—can easily paralyse the apparatus and disrupt key services and undertakings; besides the positive political influence they exercise within the middle strata from which they come and to which they are linked; beside all these new possibilities, the intellectuals can make a cultural contribution to the revolutionary movement that can help the struggle for power, and once this is won, the building of a new society in more favourable conditions than those enjoyed by past revolutions.

Importance of the Changes

It is true that because of their origin, their as yet uncertain social position and the immaturity of this still recent phenomenon, some contradictory aspects crop up. But this does not lessen the revolutionary importance of these changes, which will definitely contribute towards strengthening the struggle for socialism.

In the past, in those periods when the class struggle was about to reach a decisive point, when the disintegration of the ruling class was becoming obvious, part of the ruling class broke away and joined the revolutionary cause. And, just as in the period of the bourgeois revolution a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so in the proletarian revolution a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletarian camp, "particularly", wrote Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, "a portion of the bourgeois ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole".

But this phenomenon of the transfer of a great part of the forces of culture to the working-class camp, while it does indicate the point to which socialism has matured in the bowels of capitalist society and the proximity of revolution, is a different phenomenon from that pointed out by Marx. It is a consequence of the rapid develop-

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ment of the productive forces, which tends to wipe out the difference between mental and manual work and, under modern capitalism—underlining the nature of this tendency—to combine the majority of intellectual and manual workers into a single exploited and alienated class.

Basing itself on this situation, the Communist Party of Spain considers that the old formula of the *worker-peasant alliance* no longer fully expresses the composition of the social forces destined to act as the driving force of the socialist revolution, and has therefore propounded the thesis of *the alliance of the forces of labour and culture* which involves the former and includes the new intellectual force.

In fact, this alliance is the driving force of the anti-Franco and revolutionary struggle in Spain already.

For a New Political Formation Grouping all Socialist Forces

The Communist Party of Spain adheres to Lenin's teachings on the special characteristics and original forms of the revolution in each country. Thus it does not regard itself as bound by any specific feature of other revolutions or other experiences of the Communist Parties. It learns critically from them all, absorbs their various experiences, but considers it its duty not to become liable to imitativeness.

The Communist Party of Spain recognises the real existence of various socialist tendencies in Spanish society, and understands that in general these tendencies are bound to develop because they are based on the fact that today, alongside the working class, other, non-proletarian, social sections are objectively turning towards socialism as a higher form of society capable of ending the injustices of capitalism.

It can be foreseen that the working class and these groups will be organised in an autonomous way, in trade unions, co-operatives, social or social-political associations of various kinds, and in other parties or political groupings.

The Communist Party will be a vanguard party, not by reason of constitutional or administrative privileges, but to the extent to which it can unite in its ranks the most advanced and dynamic forces of the working class and other social sectors, and devise the most successful solutions for the development of democracy and socialism.

The problem facing those forces which sincerely want to overthrow the exploiting capitalist system, and which want socialism, will be to unite their efforts in order to achieve the common objective. And for this unity to be effective, bearing in mind that the achievement of socialism is not a matter of an instant, of elections, or winning a few demands, we need to create lasting, far-reaching, well-defined and effective forms of unity in action.

The Communist Party considers that planning should begin today for a projected *political formation* capable of bringing together all socialist forces, without suppressing any, without trying to cancel out their ideological characteristics, without compromising their special features, their independence or their particular field of action.

This new political formation, which would include parties, groups and various organisations none of which would sacrifice their structure, their ideology or their specific programme, could adopt *a common socialist programme, common bodies to work out collectively the political decisions needed for the application of that programme, and establish a degree of collective discipline in the application of these decisions.* Whenever it thought fit, it could undertake partial struggles, political, electoral or of any other nature in its own name.

Thus the new political formation will represent a real alternative to capitalist society, able to mobilise the majority of the people and to isolate the political groups of monopoly capital; capable, that is, of creating the conditions for the victory of the new society which neither our party nor any of the other socialist groupings would be able to create on its own.

If we talk of a new, stable and permanent political formation it is because no extemporaneous union would be capable of carrying out an historic task of such magnitude.

Such a political formation would represent a well-founded guarantee for the democratic, multi-party nature of the socialist society towards which we are marching and would be, finally, a very advanced political crystallisation of the alliance of the forces of labour and culture.

This new political formation presupposes the need for a strong mass Communist Party with a large nucleus of trained cadres who would work in the new formation, with the same rights and duties as others, striving to play a unifying role and put its weight behind the achievement of a consistent socialist policy.

Necessity of the Revolution

Revolution is an indispensable factor of historical progress. Every change which replaces one political régime by another, more progressive one, is a revolution. Any displacement from power of some social classes by other, more advanced ones, is a revolution. At the same time, all political revolutions have a more or less profound social content. Socialist revolution is the most radical social transformation because the working class, in overthrowing the capitalist class, sets the stage for the first time in history for a society without

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classes, a society without class struggles or differences, authentically egalitarian, free and fraternal: Communism.

The experience of political and social revolutions which mankind has known shows that these can be carried out with a greater or less degree of violence, according to the actual circumstances and the degree of maturity of the objective and subjective conditions.

In many cases, the great violence which has accompanied revolutions has been caused by the intervention of foreign forces on the side of the reactionary opponents of the revolutionary power. Such was the case in the French Revolution and, even more so, of the October Socialist Revolution.

The development of the modern state apparatus has made revolution more difficult than it was in the past. The era of revolutions carried out by small, highly conscious minorities who defeated moderately small bodies of troops and seized power is past, at any rate in the developed countries.

Today, revolution can only triumph with the support and participation of the great mass of the people, winning over one part of the state apparatus to its side and neutralising the other part.

In this sense, the very vastness of the modern state apparatus which makes it appear invincible can also, in some circumstances, be the cause of its weakness.

Today, Spain needs a political revolution which would put an end to the fascist structures and establish democratic freedoms.

The resistance to this need does not stem from the will of any important part of the population wanting to defend the régime, because such will either does not exist or is confined to small groups of nostalgics and fanatics. The resistance lies in the power of the state apparatus. But the fact that authority, the state, is at the service of the monopolistic groups and the ruling class, does not mean that the mass of officials in all the services are politically fascist.

It is precisely the growing size and technical nature of the state apparatus that obliges it to recruit a large part of its functionaries not from the ruling classes but from the middle strata of the population and often from the forces of culture. And when these social strata start facing up to the régime, their attitude also influences the functionaries and creates conditions for attracting or neutralising some of them.

Furthermore the functionaries themselves have demands, quite often pressing ones, to make of that arrogant employer the present state.

Then, too, when the revolutionary forces mature in a given country, there is a tendency among members of the ruling groups to go over to the side of those who hold the key to the future, a tendency already reflected in the predisposition of many functionaries to offer their services to the future holders of power.

A revolutionary party, besides jealously guarding the development and organisation of the mass struggle, must pay great attention to extending its influence among the members of the state apparatus. The ability and seriousness of a revolutionary party is also measured by the importance it gives to this task.

The National Strike

The Communist Party of Spain has developed the proposition of the National Strike as a form of popular uprising which can lead to the victory of a political revolution in Spain and open the way towards social and political democracy and socialism.

The National Strike is not simply a matter of folding one's arms and waiting for the state to collapse, as in the old anarchist Utopia.

Neither is it limited to a political general strike as that is traditionally known.

The National Strike is the mobilisation of the broadest anti-Franco strata, headed by the working class, confronting the present powers. For this reason the natural detonator of the National Strike must be the political general strike of the working class which will, of course, form its backbone.

It is a question of gaining the active participation of institutions such as the Church, or a wide section of it, of the professional associations and institutes, of some of the judiciary; of winning the support of, or neutralising a proportion of the army and even the police.

It is a question of taking offensive action into the streets, with militant demonstrations overwhelming the repressive forces, winning the active support of some of these in action, in order to suppress the outbreaks of resistance wherever they may arise; of demanding and imposing the formation of a democratic provisional government, methodically creating organs of power at all levels in the course of the struggle, in the localities, workplaces, universities, towns, provinces, regions and national territories, transforming the press and broadcasting media into centres of support for the National Strike through a democratic take-over by their staff and workers.

Certainly the National Strike cannot be decreed by any party or organisation arbitrarily and for a fixed date. The National Strike, like every revolutionary uprising, needs (1) the coalition of the democratic forces; (2) political and organisational preparation; (3) the right moment—that is to say, an objective situation favourable to its launching.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy: Some Problems

Charlie Brewster

John Gollan's retrospective look at the 20th Congress of the CPSU is to be welcomed as an icebreaker to discussion among Communists on a great number of questions raised by the Congress and the June '56 resolution, the answers to which still inhibit the further development of Marxism as a science of society, and the advance of Communist influence.

In particular he identifies "the Party and its relation to the masses, the trade union question and its relation to the state", as the "essential issues". With this I agree.

I assume, however, that other important questions cannot be regarded as inessential for this discussion and I would like to raise a few.

(1) About Opposition to Stalin

The resolution says: "The question may arise: Why then had these people not come out openly against Stalin and removed him from leadership? In the prevailing circumstances this could not be done."

Later, the resolution speaks of Stalin's "unseemly methods" and violation "of the Leninist principles of Party life". It deals with the "machinations" of the enemies of the USSR and Stalin's prestige.

It adds: "Any opposition to him under these circumstances would not have been understood by the people, and it was not at all a matter of personal courage."

But there was opposition and there was courage. And missing entirely from the resolution is any recognition of, or tribute to, the many thousands of good Communists, including some possibly equal and superior to Stalin in intellectual and theoretical capacity, who were murderously eliminated.

Among them must be included many of the 99 out of 139 members of the 17th Congress Central Committee who were shot, the 1,108 of its delegates arrested and the 7,697 persons rehabilitated.

It would be perhaps too comfortable here to reproach the drafters of the resolution for surviving, coming out of a period of what in the circumstances must have been one of great terror, but need they have made the efforts of those who tried to oppose Stalin seem, by implication, merely impractical, or, what is more serious, irrelevant to the post-20th Congress period?

I think their failure to include such a tribute reflects a refusal to acknowledge the extent to which the elimination of so many good comrades must have impoverished the CPSU and other parties theoretically; it explains in part the inability of the CPSU leadership so far both to provide, and theoretically cope with, the facts of their own history.

(2) About Dissent

The absence of fairness and honour to those among Communists who opposed Stalin gives reason to suspect that the known heavy-handed treatment of dissent outside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is likely to reflect a condition inside that party.

British Communists should state unequivocally that they regard independent judgment, the reservation by a party member of his or her position *on any question,* while giving support to collectively agreed policies and decisions, as an inalienable right, and that for the individual the sustaining of a difference may, in a Marxist sense, present itself as an inescapable duty.

Nor is this a simple matter of personal liberty. As I see it dissent, or a different judgment (when felt necessary) within or from a leading party organisation, should be appreciated as a vital part of the mechanism by which a modern party can retain resilience and adjust, correct or reverse given policies in the light of experience. It should be seen as a fundamental part of the practice of democratic centralism.

It accords directly with Gramsci's dialectical idea of modern revolutionary style. "Optimism of the will, pessimism of the intellect."

(3) About Beria

It is incontestable that Beria worked closely with Stalin in charge of security. He is described in the resolution as "an agent of international imperialism".

Two decades after the Congress, it seems reason-

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able to ask: why do we not have the evidence, documents, photographs, witnesses establishing that assertion? Why are his foreign masters not named?

How can Soviet party leaders suppose they have the right to expect fellow Communists to accept this claim on faith alone, after the wholesale betrayals of faith involved in the handling of the courts, history and politics of Stalin's time.

Furthermore, and more seriously, how can we modern Communists, claiming to base ourselves on a scientific approach to society and politics which make facts paramount, be satisfied with a lower standard of legal, political and historical evidence than that pertaining in most bourgeois practice?

(4) The Death Penalty and Public Accountability

John Gollan gives figures about the number of death sentences which Stalin was said to have personally sanctioned or ordered.

Since the 20th Congress we read from time to time of death sentences being prescribed in Soviet courts.

Aside from the paradox that in a number of countries based on the exploitation of man by man capital punishment has been abolished but persists in Soviet socialist society, the question arises how many people are indeed executed in the Soviet Union?

Nowhere do there appear to be regular statistics about the number of executions, and about penology generally, made available in the Soviet press or media.

In the absence of such information, how can there be meaningful public control and public accountability? How can there be any objective measure in a democratic sense of the efficiency, or otherwise, of the agencies of the law?

In conclusion, it is a good and liberating thing that *Marxism Today* has started this discussion. It can help end that often unspoken mistrust by working people who would otherwise be with us—the feeling that, despite all our positive qualities, when it comes to the Soviet Union we suspend our critical faculties.

Ron Press

The discussion of the 20th Congress of the CPSU involves two basic issues. Firstly, the problems associated with democratic centralism and, secondly, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The principle of both are accepted by our party, but only the question of democratic centralism has been experienced and that under specific "legal" conditions in the UK. The dictatorship of the British proletariat has only been able to be theorised about. This unfortunately places the discussion into the realm of the armchair.

It also deals mainly with the problems of the intellectual and little is said about the real freedom from unemployment, exploitation, rising prices and insecurity, etc. What of the workers' participation in decision-making at work, of students being able to encourage and discipline themselves, of professors and deans being elected, of farms being run by the tillers? This is real freedom and real participation by the masses in shaping their lives. These freedoms are greater in the Soviet Union and the Comecon countries than anywhere else in the world.

Even so intellectuals deserve their bit of freedom. But every person's freedom must increase and not decrease the freedom of his neighbour and thus everyone's freedom is of necessity limited.

Democratic Centralism

Democratic centralism is a method of combining, on the one hand, freedom of discussion, of each member's views having equal weight, of comradeship and charity and, on the other, decisive action, the necessary central control and self-discipline essential in a world still containing monopoly capitalist exploiters. The exact blend of individual freedom and collective decisive action varies from time to time, country to country, under socialism, capitalism, advanced socialism, fascism and so on.

In our party it cannot be said that even under the legal open conditions every member's views have or can have equal weight. Articles, letters, even branch resolution and amendments to congress or requests to speak cannot all be published or fully satisfied. Let us be clear, John Gollan's voice is louder than yours or mine. (His article 28,000 words, our replies 2,000 and he will reply to discussion.) The *Morning Star, Comment, Marxism Today*, do not publish everything submitted to them. In a real sense censorship exists. Our party has expelled members and refused people membership. It being a capitalist system the ex-member's income usually increases and he or she often becomes a treasured member of the capitalist state. In some countries where fascism is at its height members who go over to the other side may well be killed by order of the party. In Czechoslovakia perhaps the result is less severe; he becomes a gardener.

In all cases, however, the party does not publish in its press the views of such ex-members and what

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would we say if one of our expelled member's views were published in *Pravda* so that the Soviet people could judge for themselves if the British party was correct or not. It is quite clear that Comrade Gollan is unhappy with the Czechoslovakian party's non-publication of ex-party member Dubcek's news, and is unhappy with the Party's official publication. No doubt the Czechoslovakian party is unhappy about some of our published views and is upset because the views of some of our members, and even perhaps ex-members' views, are not published in our party press.

But I hear you say dissenting views can be published in Britain. Where? In whose press? But more later.

Public Discussion

Comrade Gollan is also unhappy when there is a change in leadership in the Soviet party "with little or no public explanation whatever the degree of explanation inside the party". Or again: ". . . decisions are arrived at by majority vote or consensus. It may well be that on more of these there could be public ventilation of these options as well as the general objective of policy." Such statements apply equally to all parties including our own. So much so that in a legal party King Street had to be bugged by the capitalists, because we have some secrets. How much discussion, even in the party, took place when Chris Myant became assistant editor of the *Morning Star* or the new national organiser Dave Cook was appointed? Do shop stewards' committees invite the bosses in on their discussions? Do shop stewards' committees exercise leadership or do they place all the options before the mass meetings? There is a balance. Comrade Gollan is unhappy with the CPSU's balance, but is the CPSU happy with ours? It is Comrade Gollan's opinion judged from here in Britain on the effect he thinks the CPSU's balance has on our struggle. Perhaps Comrade Gollan is wrong and the CPSU is correct? Since we are apparently all agreed that there can be no new Comintern, there can be no generally agreed answer. Except the answer of history and practice. Somehow I think the Soviet Union is doing rather better for its people than Britain is.

There are, were and will be differences between parties on various issues just as within parties there are differences. It is generally agreed that such inner-party differences are not disseminated and publicised to the detriment of each revolutionary struggle. Surely there should be a similar principle between parties. We have had differences with other parties before now. The two ECs or representatives have discussed them and agreed to differ without public pronouncements. On other occasions it has been necessary when a party has become counter-revolutionary such as in China to publish the differences. Neither we nor the CPSU are in that category.

Centralisation and Democracy

It is clear that Stalin had the balance point too far into the region of centralisation and democracy was at a minimum in circumstances which did not warrant it. He was wrong but he was not a counter-revolutionary. Remember at that time the British party agreed with the CPSU so we were incorrect then. We could well be incorrect now. Mao Tse tung is also wrong, but he is a counter-revolutionary. The strong possibility also exists that one can err on the side of too much democracy and not enough centralism and likewise still be revolutionary or become counter-revolutionary. In some cases history has yet to give its decision.

I know that the British party believes in the dictatorship of the proletariat and that Comrade Gollan believes in it too. The difficulty is that we have no experience of it so the solutions to the problems which will arise are twice removed from our reality. Nonetheless analogies arise. Take the case of the factory which is well organised. They have a mass meeting deciding to go on strike; one Mr. X votes against; the strike is 100 per cent except Mr. X who is a union member; the strike is won; Mr. X is expelled; he loses his appeal. He writes a long letter to the union journal which refuses to publish it; he loses his job.

His name is Joe Bloggs and he lives in Luton. We applaud. . . . His name is Solzhenitsyn, we hesitate, then say yes they were right; his name is Sinyavsky or Daniel; we protest. If we start discussion on individuals then we must discuss them on a concrete, detailed basis of the actual facts of each case. Not on the basis of BBC TV reports.

On some of the facts I become confused by John Gollan's statements. For instance, on page 24 —"Priority yes . . . but cannot *publicly* express them?" Next paragraph—"Sakharov *publicly* and frequently making pronouncements to foreign reporters in Moscow."

Disagreement and Dissent

The question is when does discussion become disagreement and then become dissent? And when does dissent give birth to actions which are illegal and counter-revolutionary? I have not studied each case and it is clear that Comrade Gollan agrees that some cases are mere disagreement, others counter-revolutionary. Times have changed. Counter-revolutionaries are no longer shot; true, they are not allowed their liberties, but times have not changed that much yet. We still have the CIA, President Ford and monopoly capitalism.

But the next argument is that the dictatorship

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of the proletariat should not be imposed by administrative means. Let these people speak, let them use the skill and energy of the print and TV workers to broadcast their views so that in discussion and argument we can overcome them. I don't believe it correct to give Enoch Powell space in the *Morning Star* so that Comrade Gollan can prove his views are dangerous. Nor did I take my child to church when she was young so that later on she could unlearn all she was taught. In science we no longer teach children that women came from Adam's rib, so that later on they will learn it to be nonsense and then be able to teach others that it is nonsense.

Every society, especially a scientific socialist society, exercises control over what it passes on to the next generation and the manner in which it is passed on. Some information is never passed on but rejected, some is discussed so as to reject it, yet other ideas are merely presented. It depends on the historic period, the class-consciousness of the people, the ruling class and class nature of the society. Our approaches in our circumstances must perforce be different from that of the Soviet Union. Medvedev's views may be used to temper our swords. It may well be irrelevant to the Soviet Union where they use more modern methods with a more politically advanced people.

We in Britain live under the dictatorship of capital which denies freedom of speech, liberty, even life itself, to millions through its actions and lack of action in Chile, South Africa, Angola, Ireland. In Britain itself we the working class number 75 per cent of the population, but our views are allowed less than 10 per cent of the communication facilities (very approximately). In the Soviet Union the capitalist class number zero per cent of the population and they are allowed some, although limited, facilities. (Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, Daniel and others have had material published in the Soviet Union.) So per head the dissidents are infinitely better off in the Soviet Union than the workers in Britain.

Why This Discussion?

What worries me is that in our headlong rush to show how "democratic" we will be, we will make the dictatorship of the British proletariat so attractive to the capitalists that it won't appeal to the proletariat. Or perhaps we will reappraise it, like the French party, and jump straight from the dictatorship of capital to the state of the whole people (including the capitalists). It took the Soviet people about 50 years to go from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the state of the whole people; the GDR, Cuba and others will achieve it in less time. Perhaps we will be lucky by the time we have our revolution and we will be able to do it overnight. Let us hope we haven't got to wait that long.

The question arises: is it in the nature of historic developments that distortions such as during Stalin's time are inevitable? The history of other socialist countries proves that it is not inevitable. But why at this time a major discussion on this issue with, I understand, a pamphlet to follow? Why a campaign on differences? Why at this time when the communist parties of France, Italy, Spain are at odds on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Why, if a major lurch in policy is in the offing, was it not discussed at our recent congress but left to a discussion in print by people whose job is writing and reading?

An era of rapid change is upon us. Such times require cool heads and firm leadership. Now more than ever we need the unity of the world communist movement and in such a unity the Soviet Union is a leading partner. What we need is a major discussion on the assault on monopoly capitalism, not on how the Soviet Union handles dissidents.

Graham Taylor

John Gollan's article—*Socialist Democracy—Some Problems*—is to be welcomed for its comprehensive analysis of what is probably the major issue facing the Western European Communist Parties at the present time. One feature is especially interesting: his extension of the debate on 'Stalinism' backwards before the death of Lenin and forwards after the death of Stalin. His analysis does, however, suffer from the weakness that he fails to bring out the essence of the Stalin distortions and so explain how they to some extent persisted after 1956.

Lenin's Role

In the pre-1924 analysis Gollan describes how events imposed upon the revolution by civil war and imperialist intervention swept Lenin away from the plurality of parties and, by 1921, into the outlawing of factions. While this may be true, it is, however, somewhat deterministic of Gollan (or E. H. Carr?) to portray Lenin as merely the victim of circumstances. Gollan rejects circumstances as an excuse for Stalin and should therefore incorporate more prominently into his account of Lenin the objective factor of an authoritarian tradition in

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Russia unmitigated by a bourgeois-democratic phase of any length. Equally, he should also include the subjective factor of Lenin's own character. A deterministic interpretation is dangerous, firstly, because it obscures the nature of Stalinism and, secondly, because it would mean that we in Britain could also arrive at Stalinism by 'circumstances'. In fact, most Communists believe that, although it may be harder for us to achieve revolution in Britain it will be much easier for us, whatever the circumstances, to maintain socialist democracy afterwards.

Gollan shies away, therefore, from a full critique of Lenin—though who can blame him for that? In 1918, however, Rosa Luxemburg undertook this daunting task with some success. Of course, Rosa Luxemburg (for whom Lenin had tremendous admiration) was fervently on the side of the Bolsheviks and took extreme care to make it absolutely clear that her views stemmed from a Marxist, not a bourgeois-democratic, parliamentarist position. (John Gollan slips up in this occasionally, as when on page 7, forgetting Lenin's scathing denunciation of the 'peaceful' 'democratic' equation in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,* he writes: "While Lenin was prepared to use force . . . his main idea . . . was essentially and profoundly democratic.")

In her critique, Luxemburg, partly misled by press reports in the case of the Constituent Assembly but in the main basing herself on the speeches of Lenin and Trotsky, objected that: "Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively for the one who thinks differently" (*The Russian Revolution,* Bertram D. Wolfe translation, 1940).

Rosa Luxemburg's Critique

She went on to describe Stalinism prophetically in a famous passage that must be requoted:

> "Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life in which only the bureaucracy remains an active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an élite of the working class is invited from time to time to applaud the speeches of the leaders and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom, then, a clique affair—a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rule of the Jacobins (the postponement of the Soviet Congress from three-month periods to six-month periods!)."

Luxemburg knew Lenin's genius but she also had experience of his weakness in judging character when, in 1914, he had so misjudged Kautsky that he refused to believe news of his defection. Lenin, like many dedicated revolutionaries, did not realise that others were not as unegoistically objective in their thinking as he was himself. That, presumably, is the reason why he acted against Stalin only when it was too late. Several million murders later we can now see that his estimate of Stalin as "excessively rude" erred somewhat on the side of mildness. And it was perhaps because of this that Luxemburg formulated her concern for the course taken in 1918 in this way:

> "There is no doubt either that the wise heads at the helm of the Russian Revolution, that Lenin and Trotsky, on their thorny path beset by traps of all kinds, have taken many a decisive step only with the greatest inner hesitation and with most violent inner opposition. And surely nothing can be further from their thoughts than to believe that all the things they have done or left undone under the conditions of bitter compulsion and necessity in the midst of the roaring whirlpool of events should be regarded by the International as a shining example of socialist policy towards which only uncritical admiration and zealous imitation are in order."

Stalin's 'Leninism'

It was precisely 'uncritical admiration', however, that Stalin set out to whip up in *The Foundations of Leninism.* Gollan rather skates over this work, which, published in 1924 directly after Lenin's death, staked Stalin's claim to the 'succession' and initiated his vulgarisation of Marxism (e.g. "the centre of the revolutionary struggle was *bound* to shift to Russia, parliamentary and trade union work have been proved to be '*totally* inadequate'" —my italics, G. T.).

In this book Stalin not only worked up a Personality Cult of Lenin, which came in handy later as a precedent, but he put forward an interpretation of 'the leading role of the party' which, together with extreme sectarianism and dogmatism, became the main avenue for his dictatorship. Gollan acknowledges this on page 10: "The matter was connected with Stalin's conception of the Party." In section VIII Stalin writes: "The proletariat needs the Party . . . the Party is an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat." Realising that circumstances have created over-centralisation, Stalin proceeds to ask for "still more" in the future: "The Party could not have

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risen so high in importance and could not have exerted its influence over all other forms of organisation of the proletariat . . . if the existence of a crisis had not demanded the concentration of all the forces of the proletariat at one point . . . the proletariat needs the Party not only to achieve the dictatorship, it needs it still more to maintain the dictatorship." What a perfect arrangement this 'Leninism' was! With Lenin safely dead 'Leninism' was whatever Stalin wished it to be and Lenin, mummified, could not even turn in his grave.

Turning now to the post-1956 analysis, we find that Gollan, while clearly implying that the Molotov group in the USSR and recent events in Czechoslovakia and Poland are survivals of Stalinism (though he does not use this term, so promiscuously abused by the Trotskyists), still does not define the essence of the problem. He does not draw the obvious conclusion that, with the circumstances of 1917-24 now long past, the distortions could only have been communicated to the present via Stalin's vulgarisations of Marxism. He does not reappraise the Stalinist version of 'leading role of the Party' nor does he free from Stalinist connotations 'Marxism-Leninism' (the brilliant application of Marxism to Russia, not, as Stalin insisted, a ready-made universal science), 'dialectical materialism' (not a dogma) and 'democratic centralism' (not blind obedience to rigged Congress decisions). Nor does he re-examine the positive contributions of Bukharin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, whose characters were systematically blackened by 'the Cult'.

Role of the Party

It was 'the leading role of the party', Stalin-style, that in 1968 was blamed by the Czechoslovak government for the Novotny distortions: "In the past, the leading role of the Party was often conceived as a monopolistic concentration of power in the hands of Party bodies. This corresponded to the false theory that the Party is the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (*The Action Programme,* Prague, April 1968). Stalin's theory, said the programme, had confused the party's true function and enmeshed the party in a totalitarian attempt to bind the whole of society with its directives.

Fidel Castro, discussing the Escalante case, came to a similar conclusion: "What is the function of the party? To orient. It orients on all levels, it does not govern on all levels . . . it does not have authority to remove officials" (*Speech,* March 26, 1962). Castro also perceived the problem of naïvety. Revolutionaries, he said, as selfless champions of the people, innocent of the corrupting influence of organisational power, "cannot believe that this revolution, which has cost so many lives, which has cost so much sacrifice and so much of our people's energy, could be used by anyone as a pretext or as a means to satisfy his vanity, to satisfy his ambitions, to satisfy aims which are not purely and strictly of a revolutionary nature". In *The First Circle,* written when Solzhenitsyn was still some sort of socialist, he hits a similar nail on the head when his caricature of Stalin ruminates on how often he had to restrain the "over-trusting, impetuous" Lenin. No doubt it was "over-trusting" Soviet Communists of the Lenin type that in the 1930s shouted 'Long live Stalin!' as the firing-squads took aim.

Gollan rightly wishes to revive Lenin's democratism but, still retaining the language of Stalinism, says on page 21: "The leading role of the party does not mean that the masses have no role." No doubt the masses will feel a whole lot better when they hear about that! Gollan hopes the phrase 'participation' will somehow spirit away the connotations of 'leading role'. To offer 'participation', however, is to beg the question, is merely to say that the way to avoid death is . . . to stay alive, it is equivalent to the Trotskyists' magic wand of 'workers' control' which they imagine will instantly resolve all the post-revolutionary dilemmas. Only the actual *dispersal of power* is sufficient, tempered by Castro's 'orientation'. How else can Gollan reconcile 'leading role' (if we can use that phrase at all) with 'left unity' and 'plurality of parties'?

Practical Consequences

British socialism has less reason to fear Stalinism than Russia, China or Cuba where the workers, through lack of bourgeois-democratic 'training' and low literacy levels, were both organisationally naïve and accustomed to a degree of authoritarianism. However, the transplant of Stalinism by Novotny into developed, bourgeois-democratic Czechoslovakia is a warning to British Marxists that they must constantly prove themselves *more* democratic than thou. The ETU affair was not the fault of the party but it revealed the Stalin mentality was still abroad among individual members defending the 'leading role' at all costs. And to prove ourselves we must be *seen* to be democratic right down to the individual level. Not only must leaders talk frankly but differences of opinion in the party need recognition. There must be no avoidance of controversial issues at conferences. There must be no meetings, at any level, where votes are not taken; where results are not publicised; where requests to speak are not heard by a chairman grown suddenly deaf; where the summing-up of discussion has been prepared before the meeting; where procedural manoeuvre replaces

(*Completed on p. 283*)

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